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SLEEP AND DREAM IN SHAKESPEARE

University — Université

University of Alberta

Degree for which thesis was presented — Grade pour lequel cette thèse fut présentée

MASTER OF ARTS.

Year this degree conferred — Année d'obtention de ce grade

1979.

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SLEEP AND DREAM IN SHAKESPEARE

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

IN

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1979

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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Abstract

Shakespeare employs sleep and dream in almost every conceivable manner in the construction of his plays. In this thesis several of the plays, including Macbeth, Julius Caesar, A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Tempest, are examined in order to determine the principal functions of the concepts in his work. A preliminary discussion of the historical traditions of sleep and dream theory is provided as a foundation for the examination of Shakespeare's own work.

Sleep and dream serve as aspects of characterization, as components of structure, and as means of creating dramatic tension in the plays. However, the most important function of sleep and dream in Shakespeare is thematic. The playwright exploits the contemporary philosophical approach to the concepts in order to develop ideas central to the meaning of the plays in which sleep and dream appear as prominent aspects of the presentation.

The long established tradition of Platonic dream theory provided Shakespeare with an approach well suited for the examination of the nature of illusion and reality. In addition, the tradition enabled the playwright to present the possibility of communication between the human and the supernatural realms through dream or dream-like visions. In some cases the insight gained by a character through the process of dream leads to spiritual transformation. These and other uses of the concepts of sleep and dream are discussed in the major portion of the thesis.

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Chapter I: Historical Approaches to the Theory of Sleep and Dream

When Shakespeare wrote plays in which the concepts of sleep and dream play a major role, such as Richard III, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and Macbeth, he had at his disposal a well developed tradition of sleep and dream psychology. In fact modern theorists, while dismissing the supernatural dimension, have added little to the traditional approach to the subject. In addition to an established psychology of dreams, Shakespeare had access to the literary convention of dream poetry, strongly represented in the Middle Ages and still in use during his own period. In order to understand Shakespeare's use of the concepts of sleep and dream, it is necessary to examine both the psychology and the literary conventions with which he worked.

The major theories of sleep and dream shaping European thought were rooted in Greece and Israel. Aristotle, Plato, and the Bible have been the sources of most dream theory from ancient to modern times. The Aristotelian concept of the physiologically or psychologically inspired dream serves as the foundation of Freudian theories. The Platonic idea that man can achieve a greater understanding of universal truths through dream has, to some extent, found its modern spokesman in Carl Jung. The Biblical tradition is closely allied to the Platonic in its belief that dreams are able to provide spiritual insight. Most dream theories can be related to these two major traditions, that of the lower dream and that of the higher.[1]

Aristotle deals extensively with sleep and dreams in his treatise Parva Naturalia.[2] The philosopher defines sleep as the apparent absence of sensation with only the imaginative aspect of that faculty remaining

in operation. The dream "is in a certain way a sense-perception."[3] It is certainly not a function of the rational part of the soul. But he explains that dreams are not unqualified expressions of sensation. He says, "It is evident that dreaming is a condition of the sensitive part in its power to imagine."[4]

Aristotle believes that sleep is a condition which "springs from the evaporation of food,"[5] a digestive process which results in an internal concentration of heat. He recognizes that in this state sensation becomes internally, rather than externally, stimulated. Under these conditions the dreamer often twists his internal sensations into shapes that have some deep personal meaning. Aristotle remarks that

> under the influence of strong feeling we are easily deceived regarding our sensations, different persons in different ways, eg. the coward under the influence of fear and the lover under that of love have such illusions that the former owing to a trifling resemblance thinks he sees an enemy and the latter his beloved.[6]

Aristotle is not alone among early theorists in his recognition that both physical and psychological causes for the dream experience do exist. However, he makes an important departure from the traditions of his own period by denying the possibility of divine influence on man's dream life. He flatly states that "the theory of divine origin is absurd."[7] Because all men and even animals have dreams, Aristotle believes that "dreams are not sent from God and do not occur for his ends."[8]

Since dreams are not inspired by God, it is ridiculous to believe that they can have any prophetic value. Unconscious insights into future probabilities can be revealed in sleep while the dreamer is free from external distractions. Moreover, men are frequently motivated

to action by their dreams and in this way the dream can be seen as a revelation of the future. But in large matters, such as the outcome of battles, any correspondence between dreams and future events is seen as coincidence.

The Aristotelian tradition focuses on man himself. His own desires, fears, psychological disposition, and physical condition, shape his dream life. For the Aristotelian thinker "a dream is a kind of sleeping phantasm"[9] stimulated by the rising vapours of digestion and taking the form of the dreamer's everyday concerns.

Despite the association of Plato's thought with the tradition of higher dreams, the philosopher himself recognized the physical and psychological origins of most dreams. In the Timaeus he attributes the cause of dreams to physiological functions. When the eyes are closed in sleep the fire within the individual is quieted as a result of the absence of external stimulation. However, if images of the external world have not completely dimmed, "they engender visions corresponding in kind and in number; which are images within us, and when we awake are remembered as outside us."[10]

In the Republic, Plato has Socrates make a comment that could easily be attributed to Freud. He speaks of man's basest desires:

> The sort that emerge in our dreams when the reasonable and humane part of us is asleep and its control relaxed, and our bestial nature, full of food and drink wakes and has its fling and tries to secure its own kind of satisfaction. As you know, there's nothing too bad for it and it's completely lost to all sense of shame.[11]

This passage along with that from Timaeus clearly show that Plato was not an unequivocal supporter of the theory that dreams were divinely inspired. However, shortly after the passage quoted from the Republic, Plato has

Socrates comment that the righteous man who has gained control over his bestial nature can glimpse higher truths in his dreams than he is able to grasp in his waking state. Aristotle's objection to divinely inspired dreams, that all men dream, not only the wisest and the best, is countered by Plato's assertion that although all men dream, the divine dreams come only to the wise and moral man.

Socrates himself shows respect for the spiritual insights of which the dreaming man is capable in his discussion of his own dreams near the beginning of Plato's Phaedo. A dream in one guise or another has visited him often, telling him to "make art and practice it."[12] For years Socrates avoided fulfilling the command because he believed that as a philosopher he was practicing an art. But after a trial in which a god intervened to save his life, he decided to obey the command and produce art in the popular sense, "as it was safer not to go off before I'd fulfilled a sacred duty by making verses and thus obeying the dream."[13]

In Phaedo, Plato discusses dreams in much the same way as Homer does in both the Odyssey and the Iliad. Before the philosophers Plato and Aristotle, the ancient Greeks believed that dreams were spiritual figures who visited men in the night and gave them messages from another realm of existence. The Greeks did not 'have' dreams. They 'saw' them, just as Socrates sees his dream in different guises. Dreams had a dwelling place far from man. In the Hesiodic tradition, they are described as the children of the night dwelling in a cave on the edge of chaos. In the Homeric tradition, they proceed from an Olympian diety. According to the latter view, "dreams are divine messages which enable man to gain access to the superhuman world of divine wisdom."[14] Plato's concept of the dream as a source of revelation was a conservative rather than a

revolutionary point of view.

The Homeric tradition explained the obvious fact that many dreams are false by establishing the convention of the gates of dreams:

> The truth is, we don't know how to deal with dreams; what they tell is uncertain, and they do not all come true. For there are two different gates which let out the shadowy dreams: one is made of horn, one of polished elephant's tooth. The elephant's tooth is full of untruth, so that any dreams which these come through never come true. But carven horn is never forsworn, and if anyone has a dream which came by that gate, it tells him the truth.[15]

Once Plato and Aristotle had established personal psychological and physical conditions as possible sources of dreams, the gates of horn and ivory became a literary convention rather than an accepted explanation, at least amongst the educated. As a literary convention, however, the concept persisted, eventually playing an important role in Aeneas' journey to the underworld in book six of Virgil's Aeneid. Although Shakespeare did not make use of the convention, the gates of horn and ivory do appear in the work of contemporaries including that of Sir Thomas Brown.[16]

Although Plato's theory of spiritual dreams has its foundation in the almost primitive conceptions of earlier Greek writers, his philosophical system with its emphasis on the existence of ideal forms puts the power and function of dreams into a new perspective. In his discussion of Plato's philosophy, G. C. Field remarks that

> It is interesting to note that Plato, in one of his later dialogues, suggests as a possible starting-point for philosophical reflection that we should put the question to ourselves how we can ever know that we are not dreaming.[17]

The Platonic concept of the relationship between 'reality' and the higher spiritual realm in which this world is seen as a dream or a mere shadow of the higher truth serves as the foundation of much Christian

thought. In the words of St. Paul, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am also known."[18] Since Platonic thought exercised a great deal of influence on the Apostles and on the early church fathers, it became a firmly established way of understanding the relationship between the temporal and the spiritual realms throughout the Christian world.

These concepts were still current in Shakespeare's time both in religious and in secular thought. Pedro Calderón, a near contemporary of Shakespeare, wrote in his Spanish play Life is a Dream (c. 1635):

> What is life? A frenzy.
> What is life? An illusion,
> fiction, passing shadow,
> and the greatest good the merest dot,
> for all of life's a dream, and dreams
> themselves are only part of dreaming.[19]

Calderón's lines immediately suggest Prospero's remark, "We are such stuff/As dreams are made on."[20] This particular aspect of Platonic thought on the nature of the dream state is important for both The Tempest and A Midsummer Night's Dream, two plays in which it is difficult to separate dream and illusion from reality.

The conventional Elizabethan metaphor of the world as a stage upon which we play out our lives is one aspect of this Platonic view that life in this realm is insubstantial and illusory. Shakespeare was by no means the only writer of his period to employ this particular metaphor. Sir Walter Ralegh, for example, used the image in a poem which gained enough popularity to be set to music by the English madrigalist Orlando Gibbons, a poem which begins:

> What is our life? A play of passion,
> Our mirth the music of division;
> Our mother's wombs the tiring houses be,
> Where we are dressed for this short comedy.[21]

In both The Tempest and A Midsummers Night's Dream, the Platonic concept of life as a dream is related to this conventional metaphor of the world as a stage. The dichotomy between illusion and reality, sleeping and waking, serves as the stimulus for a great deal of philosophical speculation during the Renaissance, speculation which was initially sparked by Plato's philosophy.

In ancient Greece, Aristotle and Hippocrites with their theories of the physical and psychological origins of sleep and dream were representatives of a small minority of thinkers. Even Plato's admission that many dreams have personal origins was unusual. Most Greeks retained the attitudes toward sleep and dreams expressed by Homer. As a result of these beliefs, a practice of incubation arose. According to this practice, those in need of divine counselling would perform ritual acts to induce dreams and then sleep in the temple of the god. A strong incubation cult was established at the temple of Asclepius, the god of medicine, at Pergamum. The temple became a shrine of healing similar to Lourdes in our own day. The importance of the incubation cults for later theories of sleep and dream lies mainly in the belief that the nature of one's dream can be influenced by the spirits which inhabit the place of sleep.

A Midsummer Night's Dream makes playful use of this concept. When the lovers enter the Athenian wood a process much like that of incubation begins to dominate their dreams. The spirits which inhabit the place of sleep actively participate in the shaping of the dream in which the lovers are subject, just as the god Asclepius shaped the dreams of those who slept in his temple at Pergamum.[22]

Because most classical thinkers considered some dreams the messengers

of the gods, divination from dreams was a common practice. Philosophers less 'rational' than Aristotle and Plato saw dreams as a real experience of another plane of existence. Newman remarks that the

> notion that the soul has an independent power of knowledge, which it exercises while the body sleeps, is, as I have said, perhaps the most significant contribution of the ancients to medieval dream theory. Not only does the idea itself endure, but the associations which we have considered likewise endure: the close connection of revelatory dreaming and the moral condition of the dreamer; the sense of transcending the ordinarily human, not only in the way one knows, but what one knows; and the parallel between dreaming and other forms of non-rational illumination, such as poetic and prophetic inspiration.[23]

These attitudes toward the dream state which have largely been associated with Platonic theory were widespread in classical times in a far less philosophical form than that in which Plato discusses them. Dream interpretation provided many individuals with a profitable career. Just as the modern psychologist is concerned with interpreting the messages sent by the unconscious in dreams, the practitioner of divination through dreams concerned himself with interpreting the messages of the gods and the spirit world.

Although scholars are aware that many 'dream-books' were circulated in classical times, only one has survived in its original form. The Oneirocritica of Artemidorus was written in the second century of our era by a professional dream interpreter. Artemidorus carefully distinguishes between dreams which he calls oneiros and enhypnion. The former class of dreams indicates a future state of affairs and the latter is a mere reflection of present concerns. Even a professional dream interpreter acknowledges the fact that some dreams are caused by bad digestion or bad conscience.

Artemidorus also shows an awareness of the different ways in which

dreams can communicate. "Some dreams" he says, "are theorematic (direct) while others are allegorical."[24] He systematically divides dreams into five classes: personal, those which deal with oneself; alien, those which deal with unknown figures; common, those which deal with the dreamer and those close to him; public, those which deal with the community as a whole; and cosmic, those which deal with universal truths.

Artemidorus carefully skirts the philosophical issue of the origin of oneiros. The underlying assumption of his discussion is that dreams can and often do have a divine origin. However, he refuses to affirm this concept directly:

> I do not, like Aristotle, inquire as to whether the cause of our dreaming is outside of us and comes from the gods or whether it is motivated by something within, which disposes the soul in a certain way, and causes a natural event to happen to it.[25]

Artemidorus stresses the necessity of understanding the dreamer's personal history and the customs of his nation in order to rightly interpret even 'god-sent' dreams. The form taken by an allegorical prophetic dream often depends on the individual's receiving the dream. For practical purposes of divination Artemidorus found it essential to establish a close connection between the personal and the divine. The gods speak to the dreamer in a language he can understand, at least with the help of a professional diviner.

The book which had the greatest impact on theories of sleep and dream in the Middle Ages was Macrobius' Commentary on the Dream of Scipio. Macrobius preserves in his commentary Cicero's "Dream of Scipio," a fragment of the larger work, Republica, for which Plato's Republic was used as a model. The larger work remained lost throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance with only this fragment, paralleling Plato's

"Vision of Er," in circulation. Ironically, Cicero himself was sceptical of the validity of divinely-inspired or spiritual dreams. Yet Macrobius' Commentary on the Dream of Scipio served as the basis for many of the Platonic dream theories of the Middle Ages.

Chapter three of the commentary deals specifically with the nature of the dream experience. Macrobius, like Artemidorus, distinguishes several classes of dreams. He believes that dreams are of five main types, the enigmatic, the prophetic, the oracular, the nightmare, and the apparition. Nightmares and apparitions are explained as the result of "mental or physical distress, or anxiety about the future,"[26] and,as far as Macrobius is concerned, are therefore of little consequence. The enigmatic dream roughly corresponds with Artemidorus' allegorical oneiros. It contains an important but veiled meaning and requires professional interpretation. The prophetic and oracular dreams are more direct expressions of divine insight imparted to the dreamer.

The view of the dream state which Macrobius expresses in the following passage serves as the foundation of a large part of later European thought on the subject:

> All truth is concealed. Nevertheless, the soul, when it is partially disengaged from bodily functions during sleep, at times gazes and at times peers intently at the truth, but does not apprehend it; and when it gazes it does not see with clear and direct vision, but rather with a dark obstructing veil interposed.[27]

Newman summarizes the view of Macrobius and the other neo-Platonic writers of the early centuries of our era in the following manner:

> The divine dream is possible because the soul has a two fold life; in conjunction with the body and in separation from it. When in sleep, the soul is freed from the body to participate in an incorporeal and thereby intellectual and divine life, it is able

> to foresee the future, since by nature it is aware of the reasons or causes of all generated nature.[28]

The implications of these ideas in relation to developing Christian thought are obvious. The life of the soul and that of the body are separable and the soul's freedom in sleep is a brief taste of its eternal freedom in death.

Scholars are not sure of the identity of Macrobius, and debate the possibility of his Christianity. Stahl, the translator of The Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, believes that he was an early Christian despite the fact that no direct reference to the new religion appears in his work. However, aside from the scholarly debate, there is a great deal of correspondence between the ideas expressed in his work and Christian thought. But since neo-Platonism had a great deal of influence on the development of Christianity, as it has been noted, it is difficult to decide the philosophical foundation of Macrobius' work on the basis of internal evidence.

Whether Macrobius' point of view is purely neo-Platonic or influenced by Christianity, his discussion of the nature of sleep and the spiritual and moral insights to be gained through dreams, helps give fresh impact to the age-old metaphorical relationship between sleep and death:

> His description of the soul's predicament as an imprisonment in the tomb of the body has moral as well as epistemological consequences. Since the soul is a prisoner, its true aim is escape from its body and ultimately from the material world. This escape will be a flight back to its origin, a flight back to life, since man's life on earth is truly death.[29]

Sleep offers man a glimpse of the nature of immortality.

From the time of Macrobius to the Renaissance it becomes difficult,

if not impossible, to distinguish the Biblical from the Platonic attitudes toward sleep and dreams. Old Testament examples of prophetic dreams are seen in the light of New Testament and Platonic theories of the nature of the human soul. However, discussions of the possibility of divinely-inspired dreams in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance constantly referred to Biblical examples for authoritative support.

In the spirit of Artemidorus and Macrobius, the psychologist Werner Wolff, in his discussion of the biblical tradition classifies the dreams of the Bible under eight categories.[30] The first type is the dream which reveals the sleeping individual's destiny. In the second category are dreams which indicate the proper course of action for the dreamer to take. Third are the nightmares, like that of Job, which serve to shake the soul out of its complacency. Fourth are wish-fulfillment dreams. Fifth are dreams which reflect recent activity. There are also prophetic dreams which reveal the individual's future, but must be interpreted by one skilled in divination, such as the dream series Joseph interprets for Pharaoh. Dreams which are no more than illusions are also recognized to exist. False interpretations are included in this category. "Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them and cause my people to err by their lies."[31] The biblical tradition itself recognizes that not all dreams come from God. Finally, there is the spiritual dream which Joel prophesises will be dreamed in the future in a passage repeated in Acts: "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions."[32]

Wolff's categorization of biblical dream lore does oversimplify the tradition. However, dreams and visions play such an important role in

the Bible that it is helpful to define the major concepts which appear. The Medieval Jewish philosopher, Maimonides, apologizes for making a statement which seems obvious to any student of the Old Testament, "Prophecy is given either in a vision or in a dream."[33] In the Bible, dreams are shown time after time as gateways to spiritual insight.[34]

When the important place of dreams in the biblical tradition is considered in conjunction with the Platonic and neo-Platonic thought of the early Christian era, it is understandable that theorists after Macrobius put increasing emphasis on the spiritual importance of dreams. Philo Judaeus was the earliest known writer to attempt a synthesis of biblical and classical dream theory.

Philo establishes two basic metaphorical meanings of sleep which are directly opposed. The first meaning is that of spiritual indifference or torpor. The second meaning is that of withdrawal from the material world and "openness to the true spiritual light."[35] Hence the paradox that the man who is not dreaming is dreaming. Philo recognizes that one kind of dream can come from the individual himself. But unlike the rationalists, Aristotle and Cicero, he does not depreciate the personal dream. For Philo such dreams permit the individual to gain insight into the nature of his own soul, thus bringing him closer to a true understanding of his relationship with God. When properly understood, the dream can help make the good man better and the wise man wiser.

The Church Fathers generally followed classical and biblical models in their discussions of dreams. However, with the foundation of Christianity came one important modification of earlier dream theory. Dreams had been seen to have two possible sources, human and divine. Now a third possible source was added, the demonic. In place of the

Homeric explanation of true and false dreams passing through gates of horn or ivory, Christianity offered the explanation of demonic and divine inspiration.[36]

The problem then became one of distinguishing dreams of spiritual revelation from those sent by the devil to seduce man from the right path. Tertullian believes that the problem is not difficult to solve, since dreams from the devil will clearly reflect their origin.[37] Synesius of Cyrene is the only one of the fathers to discuss dreams only as divine revelation without admitting the possibility of demonic influence.[38]

Since most of the Church Fathers believed that man's soul by its very nature moves toward God and spiritual enlightment, it was convenient to ascribe the 'evil' dream to demons. In the Middle Ages such ascription was common. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, admitted the possibliity of divine revelation through dreams, but warned against putting trust in them. Aquinas recognized the existence of personal psychological origins and also that of possible diabolical influence.[39] Unlike Tertullian, Aquinas does not completely trust man's ability to discern the true origins of his dreams. In his opinion it is usually wise to doubt the validity of the dream experience.[40]

John of Salisbury considered the dream experience in some detail in his treatise Policraticus. Because he examines sleep and dream from several points of view, his account is somewhat confusing and contradictory. However, his final position is much the same as that of Aquinas. He admits the possibility of spiritually enlightening dreams in theory, but warns against placing trust in them for the same reasons given by Aquinas.[41]

Despite a growing pessimism concerning the utility of dreams as an

instrument of spiritual enlightenment, the Middle Ages did foster the growth of the metaphorical use of sleep and dreams as a means of expressing the experiences of Christian mystics. The monastic school of St. Victor produced several writers who found these metaphors useful:

> The Victorines were, before all else, theorists of the spiritual life and their basic approach to the understanding of man's encounter with God was the bridge which spanned the gap between man's carnal understanding and the incorporeal reality he sought.[42]

The mystics were less concerned with debating the possibility of divine revelation through dreams than with expressing their own experience of divine revelation through its correspondence with the dream state:

> When an author wished to narrate the encounter of man with realities having no bodily form of their own, he could employ the dream, with its rich body of associated ideas, as a fictive device for endowing the incorporeal with sensible forms.[43]

The state of spiritual ecstasy became associated with the dream state in a new way. In the poetic expression of the Victorine mystics, the dream is not necessarily a revelation, but the revelation is a dream. The poetic possibilities of this new way of viewing sleep and dream were exploited by many secular writers of the Middle Ages.

Both the Aristotelian view of sleep and dream as phenomena, the origins of which may be found in physical and psychological causes, and the neo-Platonic Christian view of the spiritual sources of dreams can be found in the Renaissance. Robert Burton discusses dreams in his Anatomy of Melancholy from the Aristotelian point of view:

> The Gods send not our dreams, we make our own. For that cause, when Ptolemy, King of Egypt, had posed the seventy interpreters in order and asked the nineteenth man, what would make one sleep quietly in the night, he told him that the best way was to have divine and celestial

> meditations and to use honest actions in the daytime.[44]

Because Burton is examining a definite psychological problem with what the men of his age considered a definite physical cause, an excess of black bile, he appears to be relatively unconcerned with possible demonic sources of nightmares:

> Against fearful and troublesome dreams, nightmare, and such inconveniences, wherewith melancholy men are molested, the best remedy is to eat a light supper and of such meats as are easy of digestion . . . to lie on his back, not to meditate or think in the daytime of any terrible objects, or especially talk of them before he goes to bed.[45]

The man who is psychologically disturbed has a great deal of trouble falling asleep and is likely to have a disturbed sleep, even if he takes the precautions mentioned above:

> Grief, fears, cares, expectations, anxieties, great businesses, and all violent perturbations of the mind must in some sort be qualified, that you may sleep soundly on either ear, before we can hope for any good repose.[46]

Burton's observations of the troubled sleep of the mentally disturbed individual can be seen in poetic form in both Richard III and Macbeth. If it were not for the fact that The Anatomy of Melancholy was not published until 1621, it might have served as a source book for the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The theological speculations about the dream state did not overshadow common experience. Shakespeare did not have to read Burton in order to recognize that men suffering from anxiety do not sleep well. Such common-sense attitudes toward sleep and dream had been obvious to Aristotle and continued to be obvious to everyone throughout the periods which have been discussed. However, Burton's medical treatise serves as a reminder that the insights of common experience run parallel to theological inquiry about sleep and

dream.

Thomas Nash in The Terrors of the Night or, A Discourse of Apparitions, is an ardent supporter of the Aristotelian approach to the subject of sleep and dream. He does not deny that demonic spirits range over the world when darkness falls. "Wel houe the Poets tearmd night the nurse of cares the mother of despaire, the daughter of hell,"[47] he remarks. But although he believes in witches and demons, he doubts their influence on the dreams of the individual. In his opinion,

> A dreame is nothing els but bubling scuin or froath of the fancie, which the day hath left undigested; or an after feast made of the fragments of idle imaginations."[48]

Sleep is seen to have a healing function, a fact which Burton also notes:

> You must give a wounded man leave to grone while he is in dressing: Dreaming is no other than groaning, while sleep our surgeon hath us in cure.[49]

But for those who have a troubled conscience, the healing effects of sleep are absent:

> Dreames to none are so fearful, as to those whose accusing private guilt expects mischiefe everie hower for their merit.[50]

The correspondence between these popular Renaissance attitudes toward sleep and the troubled sleep of Macbeth and his wife is obvious. With all the demonic influences present in man's own mind, writers such as Nash could see no reason why the terrors of the night should be ascribed to external supernatural forces.

This line of thought in itself had theological implications which were not neglected. Unlike Macrobius, who believed that dreams of personal origin were of no interest, the theologians and preachers of Renaissance England believed that these dreams could also be used to

achieve spiritual enlightenment. Earlier writers had recognized that dreams help the individual understand himself and therefore aid in his journey toward God, but in the Renaissance this aspect of the dream experience was stressed. Robert Sanderson remarks in one of his sermons:

> For since our dremes for the most part looke the same way which our freest thoughts encline; as the Voluptuous Beast dreameth most of pleasures, the Covetous wretch most of profits, and the proud or ambitious most of prayses, preferments, or revenge: the observing of our ordinary Dreames may be of good use for us unto that discovery which of the three is our Master sinne (for unto one of the three every other sinne is reduced). The Lust of the flesh, the Lust of the eyes or the pride of life.[51]

Since the times of the early Church Fathers, theologians recognized the difficulty in separating personal from demonically-inspired dreams. However, because Satan

> marks how every man is inclined, what he loves, what he hateth, what he fears, and what he wants: and when he hath the measure of his foot, then he fits him,[52]

the question of the true source of the evil inspiration is less important than the form of that inspiration and what it reveals about the dreamer's soul.

In spite of the general tendency in the Renaissance to focus on the dreamer rather than the possible supernatural forces influencing the dream, Thomas Adams does take the trouble to set down a system of classification for the dream experience which includes the possibility of non-human sources.[53] Natural dreams are of two kinds, those of complexion, inspired by the humour which predominates in the dreamer's body, and those of affection which express the individual's fears and desires. Preternatural dreams are also subdivided into two categories, Errorem, or those dreams inspired by Satan for his own purposes, and

Tertorem, dreams in which God uses Satan as an instrument to terrify the wicked. Supernatural dreams are the dreams of spiritual revelation which have been the focus of much of this discussion. Such dreams may be either mystical, requiring interpretation by a prophet, or demonstrative, interpretable by the dreamer himself.

Adams warns his readers against faith in dreams which he considers "superstitious folly" and encourages them to seek spiritual enlightenment in the words of the Bible rather than in visions which are more likely grounded in personal or preternatural than in supernatural causes:

> Beloved God hath not grounded our faith upon dreames, nor cunningly devised fables but on the holy Gospell, written by his servants in bookes and by his spirit in the tables of our hearts. They that will believe dreams and traditions above Gods sacred word, let them heare and feare their judgements.[54]

Like the Roman Catholic theologians of the Middle Ages, the Protestant ministers of the Renaissance hesitate to place a great deal of trust in spiritual revelation which comes through dreams. Nevertheless, on the basis of scriptural authority they too accept such revelation as a possibility.[55]

The metaphorical use of sleep and dreams, discussed in connection with the Christian mystics of St. Victor's, continued to play an important part in theological discussion after the Reformation. Although Sir Thomas Browne was a physician, his discussions of sleep and dreams sound very much like those of a theologian. Like his contemporaries, Browne recognizes that most dreams have a personal source. For this reason he believes that dreams are often false and deceitful:

> A good part of our sleepes is peeced out with visions and phantasticall objects wherein wee are confessedly deceaved. The day supplyeth

> us with truths, the night with fictions and falshoods, which unconfortably divide the naturall account of our beings.[56]

However, he too accepts the possibility of both divine and demonic inspiration in sleep. In the essay quoted above he also remarks:

> That there should bee divine dreames seemes unreasonably doubted by Aristotle. That there are demonicall dreames wee have little reason to doubt.[57]

Browne's discussion of the phenomena of sleep and dreams is typical of the thought of his time. However, his use of these phenomena as metaphors in Religio Medici illustrates an approach to the subject which, since the Middle Ages, had run parallel to the straighforward examination of sleep and dreams.

In the metaphorical tradition sleep is often described as a kind of death. The relationship between the two states has been noted since the beginning of recorded history. However, writers like Browne see the resemblance as an aspect of spiritual revelation. Once Browne begins to examine sleep in terms of its brother, death, the line of reasoning developed in his essay, "On Dreams," is exchanged for one typical of the tradition of mystical thought:

> Surely it is not a melancholy conceit to think we are all asleep in this world, and that the conceits of this life are as mere dreams to those of the next; as the phantasms of the night to the conceits of the day. There is an equal delusion in both, and the one doth but seem to be the emblem or picture of the other: we are somewhat more than ourselves in our sleeps, and the slumber of the body seems to be but the waking of the soul.[58]

In a later passage he continues to express this line of thought:

> We term sleep a death; and yet it is waking that kills us, and destroys those spirits that are the house of life. 'Tis indeed a part of life that best expresseth death.[59]

The sixteenth-century poet, Gascoigne, working with the same tradition writes,

> My bed it selfe is like the grave, my sheets
> the winding sheets,
> My clothes the mound which I must have, to
> cover me most meete:
> The hungry fleas which friske so freshe, to
> wormes I can compare,
> Which greedily shall gnaw my fleshe, and leave
> the bones full bare:
> The waking Cock that early crowes to weare the
> night awaye,
> Puts in my minde the trumpe that blowes before
> the latter day.
> And as I rise up lustily, when sluggish sleep
> is past,
> So hope I to rise joyfully, to Judgement at
> the last.[60]

The tradition illustrated by these passages from Browne and Gascoigne is of particular interest because of the implicit questioning of the nature of reality. The problem posed by Plato continued to be examined by neo-Platonists throughout the Christian era. English philosophers, theologians, and writers wondered with Calderón's Segismundo, if life itself were actually a dream.

In addition to this metaphoric use of sleep and dream in the tradition of neo-Platonism and Christian mysticism, the phenomena are used as metaphors in a less philosophical sense. William Ames, for example, uses sleep and death jointly to describe the state of a corrupt man's conscience in a treatise which is of special interest in relation to Macbeth. Ames distinguishes three degrees of defect in the conscience of the evil man. The first two stages, the benumbed and the stupid conscience, are both compared to sleep. The final stage, the feared conscience, is compared to death:

> A benumbed Conscience is that which is so dull
> and heavy in its Acts, that there followes no

> strong stirrings of heart after it; nothing of purpose comes of it. Those that have such a conscience are oppressed with a kind of spiritual sleepe, wherein the sense of conscience is so bound, that it is no more moved than a man that sleepeth is by his owne dreames.[61]

Of the 'stupid' conscience, Ames remarks,

> For like as men sick of a Lethargie or Drowsinesse are not wakened commonly unlesse it be through some great noise: so likewise this conscience is not mooved, unlesse it be by the thunder of Gods Judgements.[62]

In his metaphorical use of sleep as a kind of spiritual death, Ames is following a tradition which has its roots in the Bible and which has been discussed in connection with Philo Judeas.

Both of these ancient metaphorical traditions, sleep as the true life of the spirit and sleep as spiritual death, find expression in literature. However, the more important of these traditions from a literary point of view is that of sleep and dream as gateways to spiritual revelation. The genre of dream poetry in the Middle Ages is dependent on an acceptance of dreams which offer divine illumination. In England, this genre found expression during the Anglo-Saxon period in "The Dream of the Rood" and in Bede's account of the poet Caedmon. Later the dream vision served as a frame for Langland's Piers Plowman and the Gawain poet's Pearl. The genre was also popular on the continent, finding its ultimate expression in Dante's Divine Comedy.

The concept of the divine inspiration of the poet through dreams has a long history in both Greek and Roman poetry. In Greek legend poetic inspiration automatically came to one who slept on the 'Muses' mount', Mount Parnassus. The literature of the western world has linked dream, prophecy, and poetry from earliest times. Newman claims that the dream form

> encompasses a number of works that the Middle Ages ranked among its most important inheritances: the sixth book of Aeneid, Boethius, Macrobius, Fulgentius, the Apocalypse.[63]

Although Newman may be extending his claims too far by failing to distinguish between vision and dream vision, it is nevertheless important to note that the genre was well established and widespread even in the classical world.

The efficacy of the dream vision for the poetic expression of spiritual insight depends largely on the Platonic concept of separate realms of reality. The spiritual truth, the dream vision and the poetic expression of that vision were so tightly entwined in the imaginations of the poet and his audience that Bunyan, writing in the genre during the seventeenth century, speaks of his work as if it were a dream that the reader might enter. "Would'st thou be in a dream, and yet not sleep?"[64] he asks.

From "The Dream of the Rood" to The Pilgrim's Progress, the dream vision in literature was commonly used for religious themes. However, the form was frequently employed in love poetry. One of the best known examples of this use of dream is the French Romance of the Rose, by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. Presumably romantic love was also seen by the poets as a kind of dream state, an attitude comically reflected in The Midsummer Night's Dream. The dream vision of the beloved was often exploited by the Petrarchan love poets of the Renaissance.

Chaucer employed almost all the conventions of dream poetry, both seriously and comically. Several of his works, including The Parliament of Fowls and the Book of the Duchess use the dream form as a frame. The Nun's Priest's Tale, although not a dream vision, provides an interesting discussion of dreams in which Chaunticleer presents the Platonic and

Pertelote the Aristotelian point of view. Although Chaunticleer's analysis of the dream proves correct, Chaucer's work on the whole seems to reflect a greater sympathy with Pertelote's Aristotelian position:

> Nothying, God woot, but vanitee in sweven is:
> Swevenes engendren of replecciouns,
> And ofte of fume and of compleccioun,
> What humours been to habundant in a wight.[65]

Chaucer's comic exploitation of the convention of dream poetry shows that a large degree of flexibility was present in the use of the genre long before Shakespeare's time. In order to find traces of the tradition in Shakespeare's drama, the reader must acknowledge a great departure from medieval convention, made possible by increasing flexibility of an old form. With the exceptions of stylized Petrarchan love poems describing dream visions of the poet's mistress and occasional religious allegories such as The Pilgrim's Progress, the genre in its established form had largely fallen into disuse by the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, certain characteristics typical of the genre, "blending, fusion, and double meaning,"[66] were too useful from a literary standpoint to be dropped. The freedom resulting from such characteristics permits the development of settings which are very much like those of a dream, although the dream-like nature of the poetic vision remains implicit rather than explicit.

Generations of philosophers, theologians and poets had established a rich tradition of sleep and dream lore upon which Shakespeare could base his own treatments of the subject. Almost all the points of view discussed in this chapter appear in Shakespeare's work. Sometimes the phenomena are discussed as natural processes. In some cases the nature of sleep is closely associated with the spiritual state of the dreamer. Sleep can restore psychological health or help to break down the mind.

Dreams can express the psychological state of the dreamer or they can take the form of supernatural or preternatural apparitions. The dream can be a divine revelation or a demonic visitation. Despite the warnings of theologians against trusting in dreams, Shakespeare frequently uses the dream vision as a vehicle of true prophecy. And often the border between reality and illusion, waking and sleeping, is blurred, so that the characters and the audience find it difficult to understand the nature of the experience with which they are presented. As we shall see, Shakespeare fully exploited the possibilities offered by the traditional approaches to sleep and dreams.

Chapter II: Technical Uses of Sleep and Dream in the Construction of Shakespeare's Plays

Shakespeare employs the concepts of sleep and dream in a variety of ways in the construction of the plays. While contributing to the philosophical and thematic nature of the play, sleep and dream also serve as plot devices, means of characterization, and components of structure. The contemporary recognition of both the personal and extra-personal sources of dream allowed the playwright a wide range of possibilities for the use of these concepts in the shaping of his material. The Aristotelian approach to the matter permitted a psychological exploration through sleep and dream that added depth to characterization, while the Platonic approach permitted the foreshadowing of prophetic dreams and the creation of an atmosphere of fantasy, mystery, or nightmare.

Despite the unpopularity of Shakespearean character studies since A. C. Bradley, characterization remains one of the most important aspects of the plays, an aspect which critics antagonistic to Bradley find almost impossible to avoid in their discussions of Shakespeare. Throughout his career, Shakespeare frequently employs sleep and dreams as elements of character development.

A deep sleep, undisturbed by nightmares, has always been seen as one of nature's greatest gifts. The recognition of the blessing of sleep was common in the Renaissance:

> It expels cares, pacifies the mind, refresheth the weary limbs after long work.[1]

In the words of Sancho Panza,

> Blessings on the one who invented sleep, the cloak that covers all human thoughts, the food

> that relieves hunger, the water that quenches
> thirst, the fire that keeps the cold away, the
> cold that tempers heat.[2]

And in the words of Shakespeare's Macbeth, it is

> Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleave of care,
> The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,
> Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
> Chief nourisher in life's feast.[3] (Mac. II. ii. 36-39).

Since the blessings of sleep are received only by those who suffer no psychological disturbance, the character who is able to enjoy a peaceful sleep is shown to be at peace with himself and his world. The sleep of Duncan, for example, serves to characterize him as the benevolent and divinely appointed ruler of Scotland in the same manner as his frequent use of natural images and his innocent perceptions of Dunsinane. Despite his betrayal by the previous Thane of Cawdor, "a gentleman on whom [Duncan] built/An absolute trust" (Mac. I. iv. 13-14), he is able to sleep soundly with no apprehension of evil. The untroubled conscience of Duncan permits him to sleep with an aura of beneficence around him such that even the murder-bent Lady Macbeth perceives him as one to whom she owes a natural bond of love. Despite her rejection of the natural order, she unexpectedly confesses, "Had he not resembled/ My father as he slept, I had done't." (Mac. II. i. 12-13).

The attendants of Duncan also sleep soundly. The drunkenness urged upon them by the plotting Lady Macbeth contributes to their state, but despite their drunkenness, Shakespeare characterizes their sleep as one of innocence. When they awaken, from what is to them an inexplicable nightmare, they immediately pray and fall asleep again.

> There's one did laugh in's sleep, and one cried 'Murder!'
> That they did wake each other. I stood and heard them.
> But they did say their prayers and addressed them
> Again to sleep. (Mac. II. ii. 22-25).

The innocent sleep of Duncan and his chamberlains creates dramatic tension, both because of the audience's knowledge of the plot laid against them, and because of the terror of the night which has been created before the murder. Several speeches early in the play establish the night as the environment of evil. Lady Macbeth perversely prays,

> Come, thick night,
> And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
> That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
> Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
> To cry 'Hold, hold!' (Mac. I. v. 48-52).

The effect is heightened by Macbeth's soliloquy,

> Now, o'er the one half-world
> Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
> The curtained sleep. Witchcraft celebrates
> Pale Hecate's offerings; and withered murder,
> Alarumed by his sentinel, the wolf,
> Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace
> With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
> Moves like a ghost. (Mac. II. i. 49-56).

In Macbeth night is shown to be "the Diuells blacke booke."[4] Duncan is at the mercy of the merciless evils of the night. The deep and psychologically undisturbed sleep of the innocent can be seen in this instance to serve a dual function. Not only does sound sleep emphasize the essential goodness of the character, it also indicates in a concrete manner the relative impotence of the innocent individual in an evil environment.

Shakespeare uses the sleep of the innocent victim in a similar manner in several of his plays. Like Duncan, Hamlet's father was murdered while enjoying a sound sleep:

> Sleeping within my orchard,
> My custom always of the afternoon,
> Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole
> With juice of cursed hebona in a vial,
> And in the porches of my ears did pour
> The leperous distilment. (Ham. I. v. 59-64).

The impotence of the sleeping victim is further emphasized by the reenactment of the murder in the "Mouse trap" scene.[5]

Although she is not murdered, the sleeping Imogen also falls victim to the unsuspected machinations of an evil adversary. Iachimo murders her honour while she sleeps and by doing so he subjects her to the death sentence of Posthumus. The situation in Cymbeline closely parallels that of Desdemona's murder in Othello. For their supposed unchastity both Imogen and Desdemona are to become sacrifices to the honour of their husbands. Both Posthumus and Othello lose faith in their wives as a result of manipulation by evil characters and in both cases the undisturbed sleep of the women serves as a concrete representation of their innocence.

In the second act of Cymbeline, the audience witnesses Imogen in a sleep so deep that she appears "but as a monument/Thus in a chapel lying" (Cym. II. ii. 32-33). Her own words in the next act refute the vision of undisturbed sleep with which the audience has been presented. When accused of adultery she replies,

> False to his bed? What is it to be false?
> To lie in watch there and to think on him?
> To weep 'twixt clock and clock? If sleep charge nature,
> To break it with a fearful dream of him
> And cry myself awake? That's false to 's bed, is it?
> (Cym. III. iv. 40-44).

This inconsistency is the result of a conflict between the use of peaceful sleep as a sign of innocence and the psychological truth that Imogen, although chaste, has reason to be troubled by disturbing thoughts both consciously and unconsciously.

The scene in which Desdemona expresses her unconscious fears to Emilia prevents such an inconsistency from arising in the presentation of innocent sleep in Othello. Since Desdemona's apprehensions are

largely unconscious, Shakespeare is able to give them the quality of disturbing dreams without having them disrupt her rest. In this way he is able to suggest that the woman is troubled by only partially acknowledged fears without disrupting the presentation of innocent sleep in Act Five.

Although the consistent presentation of sleep in Othello is handled better than the innocent sleep of Imogen in Cymbeline, the latter play clearly shows that the undisturbed sleep of the innocent victim is able to serve not only as a means of characterization, but also as a concrete visual symbol of innocence and vulnerability. In order to develop Imogen as a character, Shakespeare shows that she is psychologically disturbed by her circumstances, a disturbance made manifest by her sleeplessness. However, the sound sleep of Act Two not only permits Iachimo to gather the evidence needed to further the plot, but also emphasizes the danger to which innocence is subject in a world where evil is an inescapable part of life. In the same way, the sleep of Duncan serves as a symbol of his goodness rather than as a means of giving the character psychological depth. This use of innocent sleep as a symbol is in keeping with the tendency to represent goodness symbolically throughout Macbeth.

Despite the emphasis on the undisturbed sleep of the innocent in several of his plays, Shakespeare often employs disturbed sleep in the characterization of individuals who are relatively innocent but troubled by their circumstances. Imogen's restless nights are an example of this use of disturbed sleep. Her broken sleep is proof of her devotion to the absent Posthumus and therefore emphasizes her fidelity.

Banquo also suffers disturbed sleep after his encounter with the Weird Sisters. His nightmares are so troubling that he is almost afraid to sleep:

> A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,
> And yet I would not sleep. Merciful powers,
> Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature
> Gives way to in repose! (Mac. II. i 6-9).

If A. C. Bradley's view of Banquo as a man who finally participates in Macbeth's corruption were adopted,[6] then Banquo's nightmares could be seen as a reflection of his own unconscious ambitions and as a step in the process of his own corruption. However, the character seems to function as a contrast to Macbeth rather than as one whose situation parallels that of the central character.

What Banquo has seen troubles his unconscious mind, but he does his best to conquer the nightmare in his waking life. Macbeth, when confronted by Banquo's revelation of the nightmare appearance of the Weird Sisters, replies, "I think not of them" (Mac. II. i. 21). The audience is aware that Macbeth has consciously allied himself with the evil represented by the witches. His lie to Banquo, "I think not of them," contributes to the characterization of Macbeth as a man "who in full knowledge of what he was doing, destroyed his own soul."[7] The reaction of Banquo to his own disturbed sleep characterizes him as a man who does his best to consciously control his own impulses toward evil and in so doing contributes to the characterization of Macbeth by means of contrast.

Banquo's reaction also serves as an example of the proper relationship between the conscious and unconscious minds. "The cursed thoughts that nature/Gives way to in repose" should be controlled by consciousness. Critics have often noted that the witches lead Macbeth astray by

playing on his own unconscious desires. Banquo's rejection of the manifestations of his unconscious presents the audience with an alternative response to "This supernatural soliciting" (Mac. I. iii. 130).

Hamlet suffers a disturbed sleep which Polonious misinterprets as a symptom of love-sickness. He describes Hamlet's wakefulness as a step in the prince's decline to madness. Polonious tells Claudius that Hamlet

> Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,
> Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,
> Thence to a lightness, and, by this declension
> Into the madness wherein now he raves. (Ham. II. ii. 147-50).

The relationship between insomnia and madness is an indication of the depth of psychological disturbance suffered by Hamlet and, although it is not wise to take Hamlet's remarks to Rosencrantz and Guildenstein too seriously, it seems likely that Hamlet is telling the truth when he admits,

> I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself
> a king of infinite space, were not that I have
> bad dreams. (Ham. II. ii. 252-54).

Hamlet's wakefulness and his nightmares are not stressed, but the suggestion of disturbed sleep supplements his characterization as an individual constantly troubled by complex thoughts in a situation where simple action seems to be required. In Hamlet's case sleep and dream serve as indications of the psychological tension suffered by the character.

Leontes, in The Winter's Tale is troubled by a self-imposed emotional disturbance which disrupts his sleep. The waking dream of Hermione's infidelity in which Leontes places his trust throws him into a state of psychological imbalance. He recognizes the insubstantiality of dreams created by an imbalance of humours:

> Affection, thy intention stabs the center!
> Thou dost make possible things not so held,
> Communicat'st with dreams - how can this be?
> With what's unreal thou coactive art,
> And fellow'st nothing. (WT. I. ii. 138-142).

But despite this recognition, he accepts the unreal supposition that Hermione has been unfaithful to him. As a result of this acceptance he is no longer able to sleep. Paulina has faith that the truth will cure Leontes of his psychological disturbance:

> I
> Do come with words as medicinal as true,
> Honest as either, to purge him of that humor
> That presses him from sleep. (WT. II. iii. 36-37).

However, Leontes has mistaken dream for reality to such a degree that he is condemned to deprivation of the "balm of hurt minds" (Mac. II. ii. 38). Once he has permitted himself to lose his grip on reality, Leontes is put in the same psychological position as Othello, of whom Iago says,

> Not poppy nor mandragons,
> Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,
> Shall ever med'cine thee to that sweet sleep
> Which thou owedst yesterday. (Oth. III. iii. 330-33).

In both cases the psychological disruption suffered by the characters makes peaceful sleep impossible.

The wakefulness of characters like Imogen, Banquo, Hamlet, Leontes, and Othello does not imply guilt when contrasted with the undisturbed sleep of innocence. The loss of the blessing of peaceful sleep is not a punishment for wrongs committed, but rather a natural consequence of emotional disturbances caused by the circumstances with which the character is confronted, or believes he is confronted. The loss of sleep confirms the depth of the disturbance.

In the case of some characters in Shakespeare, the deprivation of peaceful sleep is shown to be a punishment for evil actions. Conscience

will not permit the characters to rest. In most cases the character unable to sleep is one who has usurped a position of power that has been divinely appointed to another. As a consequence of this disruption of the natural order of the state, the microcosm of the character's own body is condemned by conscience to suffer disruption of its natural processes:

> The genius and the mortal instruments
> Are then in council, and the state of a man,
> Like to a little Kingdom, suffers then
> The nature of an insurrection. (JC. II. i. 66-69).

The most obvious example of this kind of disturbed sleep is that of Macbeth. After the murder he finds that "Amen" sticks in his throat. His inability to pray is accompanied by the recognition that he will no longer receive the blessing of sleep:

> Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more!
> Macbeth does murder sleep' . . .
> Still it cried 'sleep no more!' to all the house;
> 'Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor
> Shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more.'
> (Mac. II. ii. 34-35 and 40 -42).

Although Lady Macbeth sleeps, it is a disturbed rest, "a great perturbation in nature," in which she is "to receive at once the benefit of sleep and do the effects of watching" (Mac. V. i. 9-10). Her doctor confesses, "I have known those which have walked in their sleep who have died holily in their beds" (Mac. V. i. 54-56), but both he and the audience are aware that this will not be the case for Lady Macbeth. Her rejection of the natural order condemns her to nightmares and eventual madness.

The parallel between the disrupted sleep of Macbeth and that of Richard III has often been noted. But the plays differ significantly in their presentation of the problem. The first mention of a possible

disturbance appears in Richard's courting of Anne. However, given the circumstances of the courtship, the audience is not inclined to believe Richard when he tells Anne, "Your beauty . . . did haunt me in my sleep" (R3. I. ii. 122).

The next mention of troubled sleep appears in Buckingham's speech to the people of London. Once again the audience is forced to reject the suggestion that Richard is troubled. According to Buckingham, Richard is "Not sleeping, to engross his idle body,/But praying to enrich his watchful soul." (R3. III. vii. 76-77). The audience, fully aware of Richard's conscious villainy, is likely to believe the opposite of Buckingham's assertion. Therefore, the revelation of the actual sleeplessness of Richard comes as a surprise. The audience is suddenly confronted with a new aspect of Richard's character when Anne says,

> For never yet one hour in his bed
> Did I enjoy the golden dew of sleep
> But with his timorous dreams was still awaked.
> (R3. IV. i. 82-84).

Richard, who appeared to be as cold and calculating a murderer as Lady Macbeth thought she could be, proves to be as deeply disturbed by his conscience as Macbeth and his wife. Waking from his nightmare before the battle of Bosworth Field, he openly expresses the fears that trouble his burdened conscience:

> What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by,
> Richard loves Richard: that is, I am I.
> Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am:
> Then fly. What, from myself? Great reason why--
> Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself?
> Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? For any good
> That I myself have done unto myself?
> O no! Alas, I rather hate myself
> For hateful deeds committed by myself.
> (R3. V. iii. 183-91).

The fear and confusion expressed in this speech of self-examination

reflect the state of mind that accompanies Richard's nightmare in which he is forced by conscience to recognize the true nature of his soul.

The presentation of Richard's disturbed sleep is closer to that of Lady Macbeth than to that of her husband. Macbeth's internal conflicts are presented to the audience from the first confrontation with the witches. However, Lady Macbeth seems steadfast until her unexpected psychological breakdown in the latter part of the play. Both Richard and Lady Macbeth play the role of the cold-blooded murderer until their unconscious guilt manifests itself in nightmares. Macbeth, conscious of his guilt even before the act is performed, is immediately aware that he has "murdered sleep," with the murder of Duncan. The subtle difference in presentation of the disturbed sleep of the protagonists, helps to differentiate the tragic figure from the historical villain. The immediate presentation of the effects of psychological disruption caused by consciousness of inexpiable guilt contributes to the tragic nature of Macbeth's situation.

Henry Bolingbroke is another usurper who finds that he is unable to sleep. But unlike Richard and Macbeth, he does not understand the reason for his wakefulness:

> O sleep, O gentle sleep,
> Nature's soft nurse, how have I frighted thee,
> That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down
> And steep my senses in forgetfulness?
> Why rather, sleep, liest thou in smoky cribs,
> Upon uneasy pallets stretching thee.
> And hushed with buzzing night-flies to thy slumber,
> Than in the perfumed chambers of the great,
> Under the canopies of costly state,
> And lulled with sound of sweetest melody.
> (2 H 4. III. i. 5-14).

The presentation of sleeplessness in 2 Henry IV is consistent with other elements of the king's characterization in both the first and second parts

of the play. Henry is forced to deal with a nation in the midst of rebellion and with an heir who shows no visible sign of promise. Faced with difficult circumstances, largely caused by his own usurpation and the inadequacy of his control over the realm, Henry is incapable of understanding the true nature of his situation and of himself. Bolingbroke's lack of insight makes his plight less tragic than that of Richard and far less tragic than that of Macbeth, both of whom finally realize "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown" (2 H 4. III. i. 31) that is not his own.[8]

Brutus, a usurper of sorts, is cursed by the same deprivation of sleep that troubles Macbeth, Richard III, and Henry IV. Brutus finds himself deeply disturbed by the conspiracy he intends to join:

> Since Cassius first did whet me against Caesar,
> I have not slept.
> Between the acting of a dreadful thing
> And the first motion, all the interim is
> Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream.
> (JC. II. i. 61-65).

Brutus, like Macbeth, is immediately torn by inner conflicts once the idea of assassination enters his mind. When the poison of Cassius' suggestion begins to act upon Brutus, the thought "burn's like the mines of sulphur" (Oth. III. iii. 329), depriving him of sleep and turning his waking hours into "a phantasma, or a hideous dream."

Brutus recognizes the nature of his psychological disturbance, and describes his problem straightforwardly. In his state of mind,

> The genius and the mortal instruments
> Are then in council, and the state of a man,
> Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
> The nature of an insurrection.
> (JC. II. i. 66-69).

However, Brutus fails to make the connection between the insurrection of his "genius" and "mortal instruments" and the insurrection against Caesar

which he plans to join. Once the murder has taken place, his conscience continues to disrupt his sleep. He is haunted by a "monstrous apparition" (JC. IV. iii. 277), which does not claim to be Caesar's ghost, but rather announces that he is "Thy evil spirit, Brutus" (JC. IV. iii. 282).

In the scene in which the ghost appears, the sleeplessness of Brutus is emphasized by the contrasting drowsiness of his page, Lucius. The emphasis upon his sleeplessness and the presentation of Caesar's ghost as Brutus' own evil spirit suggest that his psychological disturbance is more than apprehension caused by the coming battle. Like Macbeth he is haunted by the murder he has committed.

In Macbeth, Richard III, 2 Henry IV, and Julius Caesar, Shakespeare uses disrupted sleep to represent the chaos into which the whole chain of being is thrown with the murder of a king and the usurpation of power. The insomnia and nightmares of the murderers serve both to characterize the conscience-stricken individuals and to illustrate on a microcosmic scale the disorder of the macrocosm caused by the murders. Just as the undisturbed sleep of innocence assumes the quality of a symbol, so too does the insomnia of the usurper. In both cases the quality of sleep signifies something greater than the psychological stability or instability of the character.

In several cases the attitude the individual takes toward sleep and dream serves as an element of characterization. The contrast between Romeo's serious Platonic approach to dreams and the fanciful expression of the Aristotelian attitude in Mercutio's Queen Mab speech reveals a great deal about the two characters. Romeo is anxious to confide the dream which has made him believe

> Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
> Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
> With this night's revels and expire the term
> Of a despised life, closed in my breast,
> By some vile forfeit of untimely death.
> (Rom. I. iv. 107-11).

But when Romeo tells Mercutio, "I dreamt a dream to-night." (Rom.I. iv. 50), the sceptical Mercutio replies that he too has had a dream, "That dreamers often lie" (Rom. I. iv. 51). The Queen Mab speech, an imaginative mockery of the concept of supernaturally-inspired dreams, follows Mercutio's initial remark. He sees dreams as the simple fulfillment of desires and fears. The theoretical basis of the Queen Mab speech is clearly Aristotelian. Mercutio says that dreams

> are the children of an idle brain,
> Begot of nothing but vain fantasy;
> Which is as thin of substance as the air,
> And more inconstant than the wind (Rom. I. iv. 97-100).

The Queen Mab speech has often been commended by critics as a strong affirmation of the power of the imagination. Largely on the basis of this speech, Mercutio has been interpreted as a character who has the creativity and verbal prowess of a poet. Marjorie Garber remarks,

> Mercutio commends the imagination of the dreamer—as-myth-maker, and himself becomes the dreamers' dreamer, master of these smaller fantasies, controlling illusion and reality through the multiple meanings of words.[9]

The unreserved praise of Mercutio as a poetic character on the basis of his performance in the Queen Mab speech is almost universal.

It is true that Shakespeare has characterized him as a young man adept in his use of language. Furthermore, at this point in the play, Mercutio's approach to life seems more intelligent than that of the love-sick Romeo, pining for Rosaline and believing in the truth of dreams.

However, as the play develops, Mercutio's mockery of love, of dreams, and even of his own death, are shown to be inappropriate. Mercutio's remarks serve as a counterpoint to the serious attitudes toward love, death, and dream developed in the play. His point of view provides a necessary balance to the seriousness of Romeo. But it is important to note that despite the imagination and poetic power Mercutio displays in the Queen Mab speech, his Aristotelian attitude and his mockery of dream prove wrong. Romeo's Platonic attitude, although ridiculed by Mercutio, is correct in the framework of the play.

Critics tend to see the speech as the poet speaking of poetry. Without openly acknowledging their point of view, they seem to believe that Shakespeare uses Mercutio as a mouthpiece for his own attitudes toward fantasy and imagination. This inadequate critical approach fails to consider the inappropriateness of Mercutio's attitude within the context of the play. The attitude toward dream which he expresses with such verbal skill characterizes him as a slightly cynical individual who subscribes to a narrow rationalist's view of man. For Mercutio the processes of the mind can be reduced to simple cause and effect. Queen Mab gallops

> Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love;
> O'er courtiers' knees, that dream on curtsies straight;
> O'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees;
> O'er ladies lips, who straight on kisses dream.
> (Rom. I. iv. 71-74).

The rationality of the speech and Mercutio's mocking attitude toward those who believe in dream do not convince Romeo, but make it difficult for him to resist his friend's prompting to attend the Capulet masque. Despite his fearful dreams, Romeo accompanies his friends, taking the initial step which ultimately leads to tragedy.

The Queen Mab speech should not, therefore, be seen as a completely positive element of Mercutio's characterization.

The character's own attitude toward sleep and dream also serves as a means of revealing the nature of the individual in Macbeth. Unlike her husband Lady Macbeth is not "too full o' th' milk of human kindness/ to catch the nearest way" (Mac. I. v. 15-16). Lady Macbeth's attitude toward sleep is one of many indications of her corruption. Accusing her husband of cowardice she asks,

> Was the hope drunk
> Wherein you dressed yourself? Hath it slept since?
> And wakes it now to look so green and pale
> At what it did so freely? (Mac. I. vii. 35-38).

In these lines Lady Macbeth describes sleep as a process which cleanses the spirit and restores a clear moral vision. The restorative function of sleep, one of the aspects which makes it a blessing to mankind, is negated by Lady Macbeth's perverse system of values. She attempts to make her husband ashamed that his evil impulses have slept and that he has been restored to an awareness of moral demands. Lady Macbeth tries to reawaken the impulse which will lead Macbeth to "murder sleep." Her attitude toward sleep works in conjunction with other aspects of her characterization to reveal her "direst cruelty" (Mac. I. v. 41).

Sleep and dream serve not only as elements of characterization but also as devices with which Shakespeare furthers the development of the story. Often the two functions of sleep and dream work in conjunction. The undisturbed sleep of innocence, for example, usually provides the opportunity for evil plans to be put into effect. The importance of Imogen's peaceful sleep to the scheme of Iachimo has already been mentioned. Without the opportunity afforded by her untroubled rest,

Iachimo would not be able to gather the evidence needed to prove her infidelity to Posthumus.

Similarly, the sleep of Duncan and his chamberlains provides Macbeth with the opportunity to commit murder and usurp the crown. Lady Macbeth's words emphasize the advantage that innocent sleep will give the murderers:

> When in swinish sleep
> Their drenched natures lies as in a death,
> What cannot you and I perform upon
> Th' unguarded Duncan? What not put upon
> His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt
> Of our great quell? (Mac. I. vii. 67-72).

Sleep is a convenient way of placing a character in a vulnerable position. The individual's loss of control over events which will significantly affect him is used by Shakespeare to serve both comic and tragic purposes. In tragedy sleep permits the inevitable action of fate to take its course. The vulnerability of the sleeping individual emphasizes the limitations of man's attempt to control his circumstances and his environment. The inability of the character to resist his fate is an essential aspect of the tragic point of view. The drugged sleep of Juliet and the part it plays in the tragic downfall of the lovers illustrate the relationship between man's vulnerability and his tragic fate. In comedy, on the other hand, the individual's loss of control over events enables Shakespeare to place the character in ridiculous circumstances. The individual, at the mercy of forces beyond his control, often behaves in a manner inappropriate to the situation in which he finds himself. His inability to respond correctly is sometimes the direct result of his lack of understanding of the conditions which have been imposed upon him during sleep. Both Christopher Sly and Bottom suffer the effects of comic manipulations of their circumstances during the vulnerable period of sleep.

In A Midsummer Night's Dream, the vulnerability of the sleeping characters provides Oberon and Puck with the chance to anoint the eyes of Lysander, Demetrius, and Titania with love potion. As a result the woodland world is thrown into comic confusion. The helplessness of the characters, subjected to manipulation while incapacitated by sleep and unable to regain a semblence of control, is one of the major sources of comedy in the play.

Often the character's disorientation and lack of control are used to create scenes which have a great deal of dramatic power in visual presentation. The drugged sleep of Juliet, mistaken as death by Romeo, brings the plot to its climax by precipitating Romeo's suicide. However, since the audience is aware that Juliet is alive and about to waken from her sleep, it also serves to bring dramatic tension to its peak.

The parallel situation in Cymbeline also functions in two ways. Imogen's death-like sleep furthers the plot by providing a transition between her fellowship with her lost brothers and her association with the Roman forces. At the same time it provides the opportunity for the visually sensational scene in which Imogen embraces the headless corpse of Cloten, believing it to be the body of her husband.

Shakespeare also uses the theories of sleep and dream as means of developing his narratives. In most cases the character's misuse or misunderstanding of the concepts provides the major contribution to the action. In Richard III, for example, Gloucester uses Edward's belief in prophetic dreams in order to bring about the imprisonment of Clarence.

> Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
> By drunken prophecies, libels, and dreams,
> To set my brother Clarence and the King
> In deadly hate the one against the other. (R3. I. i. 32-35).

Richard relies on the acceptence of dreams as a vehicle of truth in order to create false suspicions which serve his purpose.

In a similar manner Iago misuses the concept of dreams in order to manipulate the mind of Othello. However, unlike Richard, Iago relies on the Moor's acceptance of Aristotelian rather than Platonic notions about the source of dreams. Edward believes that the future can be revealed in dreams and that "by G/His issue disinherited should be" (R3. I. i. 56-57). Othello, on the other hand, believes that dreams denote "a foregone conclusion" (Oth. III. iii. 428). In each case the character who wishes to convince another of the truth of something which is actually false relies on the belief that dreams are based on either spiritual or psychological truths. False dreams are used to sanction the falsehoods by which the action is manipulated.

False interpretations of actual dreams also contribute to plot development. Calphurnia's dream in Julius Caesar is an important example. Caesar's wife understands the significance of her dream and almost succeeds in convincing her husband to avoid the senate house. Decius, fully aware of the truth of Calphurnia's forebodings, forces a false interpretation on the dream:

> This dream is all amiss interpreted;
> It was a vision fair and fortunate.
> Your statue spouting blood in many pipes,
> In which so many smiling Romans bathed,
> Signifies that from you great Rome shall suck
> Reviving blood, and that great men shall press
> For tinctures, stains, relics, and cognizance.
> This by Calphurnia's dream is signified.
> (JC. II. ii. 83-90).

The deliberate manipulation of the dream's meaning by Decius makes the success of the conspiracy possible.

In The Taming of the Shrew, Shakespeare uses the concepts of sleep

and dream as elements of structure rather than of plot. The deception of the unsuspecting Christopher Sly serves as a framing device which "performs the important tasks of distancing the later action and of insuring a lightness of tone."[10] The beggar's confusion upon waking to a new identity not only establishes the comic atmosphere which continues throughout the main action, but also presents the problem of distinguishing between illusion and reality, one of the play's major themes. Sly is unable to understand his position.

> Am I a lord, and have I such a lady?
> Or do I dream? Or have I dreamed till now?
> (Shr. Ind. ii. 66-67).

The structure of The Taming of the Shrew is that of a play within a play, or of a dream within a dream. Although the induction can be shown to serve an important thematic function in the play, it is important to recognize that the use of the frame was a common convention of the Elizabethan stage. Anne Righter points out that between 1550 and the publication of Kyd's Spanish Tragedy in 1589, there was an increasing "emphasis upon the play as illusion, akin to the shadow and the dream."[11] In order to create a sense of illusion on the Elizabethan stage, the playwright often increased the psychological distance between the audience and the main action by means of a frame. In The Spanish Tragedy the Ghost of Andrea and the allegorical figure of Revenge watch the action unfold. In Marston's The Malcontent, the King's Men appear as themselves to discuss the play before it is performed. The convention was so firmly established that it became an object of satire in Beaumont's triple-layered The Knight of the Burning Pestle.

The use of dream as a frame for the action in The Taming of the Shrew allows Shakespeare to draw the audience's attention to the

similarities between the world of the play and the world of dream. The question of the nature of illusion is made a part of the structure of the dream. The audience is forced to question the relationship between the play, dream, and what they usually consider to be reality.

Dream serves a similar function in the structure of A Midsummer Night's Dream. In the later comedy, Shakespeare incorporates the framing action into the plot. The Athenian court stands between the audience and the fantasy world of the Athenian wood. In this case, a degree of distance is required in the presentation of the fairy world. To supplement the function of the court as a frame, Shakespeare suggests that the comic confusion in the wood is a dream. The distance, the setting, and the dream-like atmosphere, permit the unreserved acceptance of the fantasy at the core of the play.

Both The Tempest and The Winter's Tale are largely dependent on the atmosphere of dream. The Romances actually imitate many aspects of the dream experience. The irrational and seemingly unmotivated behavior of Leontes, the existance of a sea-coast in Bohemia, the unexpected appearance of a bear, and the awakening of Hermione's statue are all elements of the unreasonable world of dream. In The Tempest, the shipwreck which leaves everyone unharmed introduces the audience to the magical world of Prospero's island. The variety of perceptions of the island expressed by the characters shows that here reality is as much a reflection of state of mind as an individual's dream. The quality of dream plays so great a role in both these Romances that the plays themselves can be seen as a kind of dream.

Another important technical function of dream in the work of Shakespeare, in addition to those of characterization, plot development,

and structure, is that of recapitulation. Aerol Arnold's article "The Recapitulation Dream in Richard III and Macbeth"[12] provides a close analysis of this use of dream. In Richard III, both Clarence's dream and that of Richard at the end of the play remind the audience of the complicated historical events presented in the Henry VI trilogy. This use of dream solves the structural problems presented by the intricate pattern of historical data that lies behind the play. The sequence of ghosts which haunts Richard on Bosworth Field draws together the victims he has murdered not only in this play, but in the preceding trilogy.

Clarence's dream is more complex than Richard's and serves a number of functions. In his discussion Arnold divides Clarence's dream into three parts.

> the first part (II. 9-20), which is allegorical and foreshadows Clarence's death at the hands of his brother, is clear to the audience, already informed of Richard's plans, but is not clear to Clarence. The middle section (II. 20-33) is a richly elaborated passage describing the drowning Clarence experiences under the sea. The final section (II 43-63) tells of his meeting with the dead he wronged and turns our attention back to 3 Henry VI and to the crimes for which Clarence must die.[13]

The passage of recapitualtion not only reminds the audience of Clarence's former crimes, it also serves to make Clarence aware of his guilt. The recognition of his evil causes him to repent of the acts he has committed. He prays for his salvation and asks that he be allowed to bear the full punishment if God's wrath cannot be appeased:

> O God! If my deep prayers cannot appease thee,
> But thou wilt be avenged on my misdeeds,
> Yet execute thy wrath in me alone:
> O spare my guiltless wife and my poor children.
> (R3. I. iv. 69-72).

Almost as a sign of God's mercy and forgiveness, Clarence falls into a

deep sleep, an indication of his innocence.

The reaction of Clarence to the parade of his past crimes contrasts with that of the unrepentant Richard. Although Richard's initial reaction to his nightmare is one of prayer, he immediately rejects the promptings of conscience:

> Give me another horse! Bind up my wounds!
> Have mercy, Jesus! Soft! I did but dream.
> O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!
> (R3. V. iii. 178-180).

Lady Macbeth proves to be even farther from repentance than Richard. Despite the constant repetition of the murder in her dreams, Lady Macbeth continues in the vain attempt to wash her sin away with water. Her madness is proof of the inadequacy of her belief that "A little water clears us of this deed." (Mac. II. ii. 66), yet she keeps rubbing her hands and attempting to dispel her guilt by an act of will, "Out, damned spot! Out I say." (Mac. V. i. 32). The recapitulation dream forces the consciousness of guilt upon her, but she fails to accept the opportunity for repentance which the awareness of sin supplies. The reaction to the recapitulation dream in this case shows that Lady Macbeth is damned.

The dream of Clarence serves not only as a means of recalling events of the past but also serves as a prophetic insight into the future. The prophetic dream appears frequently in Shakespeare's work and in the work of his contemporaries. Dramatic convention in the Elizabethan period required that prophetic dreams be "regularly greeted by false or misleading explanations of their nature and significance."[14] The existence of both the Aristotelian and Platonic approaches to dream during the Renaissance enabled the writers of the period to present true prophetic visions which the characters reasonably interpret as

reflections of natural physical and psychological processes. The character approaches dream from the Aristotelian point of view when the Platonic theory should be applied. Mercutio's Queen Mab speech is an example of this misapplication of dream theory.

The misunderstanding of prophetic dreams in Shakespeare often takes the form of the character's failure to attempt interpretation, or of his failure to interpret correctly. Few characters reject the possibility that dreams contain important messages. Antigonus, for example, accepts the importance of his dream despite his usual distrust of "superstition':

> Dreams are toys;
> Yet for this once, yes, superstitiously,
> I will be squared by this.
> (WT. III. iii. 38-40).

The failure to interpret dreams correctly is often the natural consequence of the veiled form in which the messages are received. The prophetic dreams of the plays are full of the confused dream imagery of real experience. Romeo's second dream foreshadows the events to come, but in a manner he finds difficult to understand. As a result his response to the vision is incorrect:

> If I may trust the flattering truth of sleep,
> My dreams presage some joyful news at hand.
> My bosom's lord sits lightly in his throne,
> And all this day an unaccustomed spirit
> Lifts me above the ground with cheerful thoughts.
> (Rom. V. i. 1-5).

The death and subsequent resurrection portrayed in his dream mislead Romeo. In truth, his wife does find him dead. However, the only form of resurrection Romeo experiences within the bounds of the play is the raising of his statue by the Capulets.

Marjorie Garber says of Romeo's reaction to his first prophetic dream,

> Romeo's denial of the dream is more than behavior, more than device. It seals him as an actor in a world he only partially comprehends. It is an act and a sign at once. From this point the tragedy extends.[15]

The second misunderstood dream sustains the effect of the first. The creation of a tragic sense of man's destiny is one of the important functions of the prophetic dream. The disregard or misinterpretation of the vision serves

> to emphasize the dramatic, and tragic irony of man's inability to recognize his fate even when it is symbolically revealed to him.[16]

The confused form of the vision which leads to misinterpretation is an accurate reflection of the dream process. However, Shakespeare's primary purpose is not to prove the accuracy with which he can reproduce the dream form. It is misleading to emphasize the psychological process of the dream as if the character were a patient undergoing psychotherapy. Garbor falls into the pattern for which Bradley has often been criticized in the following portion of her analysis of Clarence's dream:

> Clarence thus displaces his unacceptable distrust of Richard by transferring his just suspicions to analogous episodes in his own life. Simultaneously he punishes himself for having these suspicions by turning them against himself.[17]

The portion of Clarence's dream which best serves the function of character development is that in which he repents of his evil and prays for the protection of his family. The vision of his own death is not an aspect of his characterization, but rather a premonition of events which are to come. The prophetic vision is not a reflection of unconscious fear, but a warning of future events.

The prophetic aspects of dream foreshadow the subsequent action,

produce dramatic irony, and suggest the operation of fortune, fate, or destiny in the lives of men. But prophetic dreams seldom give insight into the operation of the character's own unconscious mind. The critic who interprets the prophetic vision from the Aristotelian point of view makes the same mistake as Mercutio.

The versatility of sleep and dreams as components of the play's construction provides a major reason for their frequent use in Shakespeare's work. The concepts serve as symbols, methods of characterization, and means of furthering plot development. They function as components of structure, as devices of summary and as means of creating atmosphere. Prophetic dreams provide foreshadowing, dramatic irony, and a suggestion of destiny or providence.

In addition to this wide range of technical functions the concepts of sleep and dream are also used by Shakespeare for thematic purposes. Often the contribution made by sleep and dream to the meaning of a play depend on the ability of both the characters and the audience to distinguish natural dreams from those which are supernatural or praeternatural, an aspect of the use of sleep and dream which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter III: Supernatural and Praeternatural Dreams

The problems that have plagued dream interpreters throughout history are also confronted by Shakespeare's characters in their attempts to distinguish the source and meaning of their dreams. From the time of the ancient Greeks to Shakespeare's own day it was recognized that some dreams are misleading while others contain important truths. The tragedy that can follow misinterpretation has been discussed in the previous chapter. However, a character's misunderstanding of the nature of his own dreams may have implications beyond the creation of a tragic atmosphere and the furthering of the narrative. The individual's reaction to the world of dreams and the relationship he establishes between his consciousness and the unconscious and supernatural realms often contributes significantly to the themes developed in the play.

The classification of dreams into the categories of natural, praeternatural, and supernatural has been discussed in the first chapter. It is important to keep in mind that discussions of the subject from that of Tertullian to that of Thomas Adams acknowledge the existence of dreams inspired by both divine and demonic forces, but warn against placing trust in the messages of dreams. I quote again the opinion of Thomas Browne,

> A good part of our sleepes is peeced out with visions and phantasticall objects wherein wee are confessedly deceaved. The day supplyeth us with truths, the night with fictions and falsehoods, which unconfortably divide the naturall account of our beings.[1]

The deceptive nature of most dreams is continually stressed in

sources from Homer to Robert Burton. In general the experts on the subject, both physicians and divines, consider the safest approach to dream one in which all visions are treated as if derived from natural sources. Since the possibility of natural dreams had been firmly established by Aristotle and had been accepted as a truth by most theorists, there was every reason to suspect that dreams were usually manifestations of unconscious desires or fears. The sensible way to interpret dream visions was from the personal point of view. The common sense approach of Mercutio is a reflection of the attitude generally taken by dream theorists in the Renaissance:

> I talk of dreams;
> Which are the children of an idle brain,
> Begot of nothing but vain fantasy;
> Which is as thin of substance as the air,
> And more in constant than the wind.[2]
> (Rom. I. iv. 96-100).

When this approach is adopted, the dreamer is encouraged to take moral responsibility for his own evil desires. He is not permitted the opportunity to blame them on demonic inspiration. Similarly, he is not given the opportunity to follow the promptings of dreams which may be demonic by laying claim to divine inspiration. Therefore, the approach can be seen as practical from an ethical, as well as a scientific point of view.

This practical application of Aristotelian dream theory may have proved useful in daily life, but Shakespeare's treatment of the concept of dream shows the approach to be inadequate in the imaginative realm of the plays. The characters in Shakespeare's work often find that there are disastrous consequences when the possibilities of divine and demonic inspiration are not taken seriously.

One reason for the emphasis on the influence of supernatural and

praeternatural forces in Shakespeare's work is undoubtedly the popularity of superstitious beliefs amongst members of the audience. Mercutio's Queen Mab speech mocks both the Platonic approach to dream theory and the existence of folk superstitions. Queen Mab, like Robin Goodfellow in A Midsummer Night's Dream, is a spirit taken from the folklore of the British Isles. By adopting her as the midwife who brings forth dreams and by stressing her diminutive size, Mercutio acknowledges the widespread belief in the extra-personal sources of dream and at the same time reduces the Platonic justification for such a belief to the level of popular superstition and triviality. Since the serious consequences of Romeo's failure to follow his prophetic dream prove Mercutio's attitude to be inadequate, the events of the play tend to confirm the popular superstitions which Mercutio denies with his mocking rationality.

The appearance of the witches in Macbeth is another example of Shakespeare's use of popular superstition to serve his dramatic purposes. It has often been pointed out that Macbeth was written with King James in mind. The king's belief in witches, coupled with the widespread acceptance of their existence by his subjects, led historically to the persecution of those suspected of witchcraft during James' reign. As a result of this widespread belief, the actual appearance of the witches on stage had a great deal of dramatic power.

Similarly, the appearance of ghosts in Hamlet, Richard III, Julius Caesar and other Shakespearean plays had a powerful effect on the audiences of the Renaissance. A supernatural or praeternatural visitation witnessed by the audience added an important dimension to its understanding of the play. The Renaissance viewer would not jump

to the conclusion that Banquo's ghost is nothing more than a manifestation of Macbeth's troubled conscience, just because the apparition is unseen by the other banqueters. Kenneth Muir, seemingly confident that he knows a better way to present the scene than that adopted by the King's Men, bases his revision of the method of production on just such a conclusion:

> The double appearance of Banquo's ghost . . . is clearly the result of hallucination since it is seen by Macbeth alone. (Although when Simon Forman saw a performance of the play in 1610 the ghost entered and sat in Macbeth's place, and although the Folio stage-direction confirms this, it would be more effective for the Ghost not to appear in the scene).[3]

Muir fails to consider the implications of the ghost's appearance in terms of Renaissance psychology and superstition. The audience of the period not only accepted the reality of supernatural and praeternatural forces, but also believed that these forces were able to communicate with man through the unconscious mind. The belief in the existence of spirits and in their ability to communicate with the individual allowed Shakespeare to use ghosts, witches and fairies for dramatic effect, while at the same time revealing the character's state of mind through his reaction to the supernatural and praeternatural forces with which he is confronted.

Since it was a firmly established tenet of dream theory that communication between the human and spiritual realms often takes place during sleep, the appearance of apparitions and other unnatural forces in the plays often occurs within a dream or in a manner which has the appearance of dream. The ghosts which appear to Macbeth and Brutus, as well as the ghost which appears to Hamlet in his mother's chamber, are seen by only the protagonist. This does not necessarily imply that,

as Muir suggests, these apparitions are mere hallucinations. The presentation of the ghost as a reflection of the protagonist's disturbed state of mind is undeniable. However, it is also possible to see the disturbed state of mind as the portal of the unconscious through which the praeternatural apparition enters the awareness of the protagonist. Just as the body suffering physical fatigue is more susceptible than the healthy body to invasion by disease, the mind worn down by a troubled conscience and lack of sleep is susceptible to the invasion of praeternatural suggestions in the form of hallucinations or waking dreams.

In many of the plays, from A Midsummer Night's Dream to The Tempest, it is difficult to separate the manifestations of supernatural power from the dream state. The communication between the human world and both the higher and lower states of being is almost invariably accomplished through dream or mysterious visions and omens which have a dream-like quality. The precedent for this literary handling of supernatural communication was set by the Greeks. In the Homeric tradition, "dreams are divine messages which enable man to gain access to the superhuman world of divine wisdom,"[4]

Dream is also an important vehicle of divine inspiration in the biblical tradition. As Maimonides remarks, "prophecy is given either in a vision or in a dream"[5] and often it is difficult to tell the difference between the two forms of insight. The similarity between supernaturally inspired visions and dreams was reinforced throughout the Medieval period by Christian mystics, such as the Victorines, who used dream as a metaphor in their descriptions of visionary experiences. Shakespeare himself clearly equates the two modes of supernatural insight in Priam's words to Hector:

> Come, Hector, come; go back.
> Thy wife hath dreamed, thy mother hath had visions,
> Cassandra doth forsee, and I myself
> Am like a prophet suddenly enrapt
> To tell thee that this day is ominous. (Tro. V. iii. 62-66).

Since Renaissance dream theory is an outgrowth of both the Greek and biblical traditions, the close relationship between dreams and waking visions in Shakespeare is not unexpected. In order to glimpse the supernatural realm it is necessary to suspend the rational daylight consciousness. In accordance with this theory, most forms of supernatural communication in Shakespeare's plays are reflections of the dream state.

The recognition of the possibility of demonic and divine visitation through dream and dream-like hallucinations plays an essential part in the audience's understanding of the character's reactions to his confrontation by supernatural forces.[6] The sense of inescapable tragic fate produced by the numerous prophetic dreams in Shakespeare is largely dependent on the audience's realization that the character is ignoring a providential warning.

The presentation of prophetic dreams varies in form from one play to another and even varies within a single play. The prophetic portion of Clarence's dream has been discussed in the previous chapter. It is interesting to note that Shakespeare gives prophetic dream three different forms in Richard III, the dream of Clarence, the dream of Stanley, and the dream simultaneously experienced by Richard and Richmond. In the sequence of presentation Shakespeare moves from the prophecy in which supernatural influence is least evident to the one in which such influence is most evident.

Garber, anxious to support her psychological interpretation of

Clarence's dream, makes the following remark:

> Clarence's dream internalizes the ghosts, portrays them directly as elements of imagination. Gone is the cumbersome apparatus of the Bosworth dream, and gone likewise is the aura of artificiality created by the mechanical pattern of omen and fulfillment. Dream here is an agency of liberation, a means of freeing prophecy from device and relating it to psychological intuition.[7]

Garber fails to explain why Shakespeare, who has proven himself capable of reproducing the pattern of actual dream form in Clarence's vision, would resort to the "cumbersome" and "mechanical pattern" of the Bosworth dream near the climax of the play. The explanation for this manner of presentation lies in the pattern Shakespeare has established in the play's sequence of prophetic dreams.

Although the audience is fully aware of Richard's plot against his brother and recognizes the prophetic nature of the first part of Clarence's dream, the dreamer himself is puzzled by the message he receives. Clarence, like Romeo, is unable to grasp the supernatural warning behind the confused dream form. However, the vision does make a profound impression on him. The terror evoked by the dream makes Clarence remember it in detail:

> O, I have passed a miserable night,
> So full of fearful dreams, of ugly sights,
> That, as I am a Christian faithful man,
> I would not spend another such a night
> Though 'twere to buy a world of happy days--
> (R3. I. iv. 2-7).

The dream warns Clarence that he will be murdered, but also warns him of the terrors he will face after death if he does not repent of the evil he has done:

> My dream was lengthened after life.
> O, then, began the tempest to my soul!

> I passed (methought) the melancholy flood,
> With that sour ferryman which poets write of,
> Unto the Kingdom of perpetual night.
> (R3. I iv. 42-46).

Clarence does not acknowledge the divine inspiration of this monitory dream, but nevertheless heeds the spiritual warning it imparts. It is impossible for him to avoid the murder arranged by his brother. His powerlessness against the death which has been decreed introduces an element of tragic destiny to his situation. However, Clarence's reaction to his fated death confirms his moral freedom.

The relationship between fate and free will is an important aspect of the use of prophetic dreams in Shakespeare's work. The character's reaction to the prompting of divine and demonic forces in his dreams is a clear indication of the nature of his soul and of his relationship to the cosmic order. The following illustration of the relationship between moral freedom and destiny can be applied metaphorically to the Shakespearean character's reaction to the "supernatural soliciting" of his dreams:

> In the symbolism of Renaissance art fate is sometimes represented as the wind blowing on the sails of a vessel, while man stands at the steering wheel and determines the direction as much as it can be determined under the given condition.[8]

The metaphor is actually used by Shakespeare in the portrayal of Romeo's reaction to his prophetic dream:

> Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
> Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
> With this night's revels and expire the term
> Of despised life, closed in my breast,
> By some vile forfeit of untimely death.
> But he that hath the steerage of my course
> Direct my sail! (Rom. I. iv. 107-13).

The form of the prophetic dream is not an indication of the

character's own psychological processes. However, his reaction to the messages he receives in his dreams is certainly an important element of his characterization. In Clarence's case the prophecy is imparted in a veiled form. Although he does not completely understand the meaning of his dream, his reaction to its contents shows that he has gained a measure of spiritual insight.

Stanley's dream, the next in the play's sequence of prophetic visions, is more obviously monitory than that of Clarence. There is no confusion in the dream's symbolism and it is therefore immediately understood by its recipient. Richard had taken the boar as his heraldic sign in the waking world. So, when Stanley "dreamt the boar had rased off his helm" (R3. III, ii, 11), he understood the danger.

The messenger Stanley sends to his friend Hastings indicates that the source of his master's fears is more substantial than that of dream:

> He dreamt the boar had rased off his helm:
> Besides, he says there are two councils kept;
> And that may be determined at the one
> Which may make you and him to rue at th' other.
> (R3. III. ii. 11-14).

It can be argued on the basis of this speech that the dream itself is nothing more than the response of Stanley's unconscious to his conscious fears. Hastings immediately jumps to this conclusion:

> Tell him his fears are shallow, without instance;
> And for his dreams, I wonder he's so simple
> To trust the mock'ry of unquiet slumber.
> (R3. III. ii. 25-27).

The events of the play prove Hasting's attitude toward Stanley's dream to be an improper response to a supernatural warning. When he finally realizes that he was mistaken in his rational approach to the dream it is too late:

> Woe, woe for England, not a whit for me!
> For I, too fond, might have prevented this.
> Stanley did dream the boar did rase our helms;
> But I did scorn it and disdain to fly.
> Three times to-day my footcloth horse did stumble,
> And started when he looked upon the Tower,
> As loath to bear me to the slaughterhouse.
> (R3. III. iv. 80-90).

The events subsequent to the revelation of Stanley's dream clearly indicate the supernatural source of the warning. In the speech just quoted, Hastings himself abandons his Aristotelian attitude to Stanley's "unquiet slumbers" and acknowledges the probability that forces beyond the mortal world have been attempting to give warning of approaching danger. In the case of Stanley's dream the message is clearer and the supernatural source more evident than they had been in the dream of Clarence.

The dream shared by Richard and Richmond at Bosworth Field is given a form which has been prepared for by the preceding dreams in the sequence. The supernatural source of the vision is undeniable, since the series of ghosts is not only seen by the two dreamers simultaneously, but is seen by the audience as well. Just as in the case of Stanley's dream, the vision is intended for two men, one of whom accepts the message while the other rejects it.

Richmond's dream is the only prophetic vision in the play which is not monitory. The dramatic function of the simultaneous presentation of the two dreams is one of contrast. Since the apparitions promise Richmond good fortune, it is easy for him to accept the prophetic vision. However, when viewed in terms of the dream pattern established in the play, the form of presentation of the Bosworth dream can be seen to have greater significance than that of simple contrast.

The Bosworth dream reveals in a concrete manner the relationship

between the characters and the supernatural realm of existence. Richmond, like Stanley, accepts the possibility of supernatural revelation through dream. He tells his lords,

> The sweetest sleep, and fairest boding dreams
> That ever ent'red in a drowsy head
> Have I since your departure had, my lords.
> Methought their souls whose bodies Richard murdered
> Came to my tent and cried on victory.
> I promise you my soul is very jocund
> In the remembrance of so fair a dream.
> (R3. V. iii. 229-34).

Richard's reaction, like that of Hastings, is one of disbelief in the power of dreams:

> Let not our babbling dreams affright our souls;
> Conscience is but a word that cowards use,
> Devised at first to keep the strong in awe.
> (R3. V. iii. 309-11).

Richard's dream at Bosworth Field is as clear a call to repentance as the dream of Clarence. Like his brother, the king is confronted by the spirits of those he has murdered. However, unlike Clarence, Richard rejects the opportunity to exercise his moral freedom in the face of destiny. In part the rejection of this opportunity is the result of Richard's refusal to acknowledge the possibility of supernatural revelation through dreams. The consequences of Hastings' failure to heed Stanley's warning vision considered in conjunction with Clarence's prophetic insight into the after-life, suggest the ultimate results of Richard's refusal to respond correctly to his supernaturally-inspired dream.

The possibility of supernatural revelation and the necessity of proper response to the warnings received in dreams are presented step by step in the prophetic visions of Richard III. Although Clarence is not fully aware of the nature of his vision, he unconsciously responds

in the correct manner. The supernatural source of Stanley's dream is paradoxically clearer than that of Clarence, yet easier to deny with rational argument. Stanley's trust that his dream is more than a manifestation of unconscious fears saves him, while Hasting's mocking rationality proves fatal. The necessity of proper response to the supernaturally-inspired dream is clearly illustrated by the contrast between the two characters. This contrast paves the way for the almost ritualistic procession of apparitions in the Bosworth dream. The supernatural source of the vision is clear. The necessity of repentance is powerfully presented. And Richard's failure to respond despite the overwhelming pressure of his own conscience is shown to be more tragic than the simple-minded rejection of prophecy by Hastings. The progressive development of the pattern of dream visions in Richard III belies Garber's suggestion that the Bosworth dream is a "cumbersome apparatus."[9] Richard's dream is the dramatic fulfillment of concepts suggested from the beginning of the play.

Shakespeare also makes the prophetic dream an important part of Julius Caesar. In this play supernatural warnings of imminent destruction appear everywhere and are everywhere unheeded or misunderstood. It has been frequently pointed out that Titinius' words, "Alas thou hast misconstrued everything" (JC. V. iii. 84), can be applied to almost every character in the play.

The constant supernatural warnings and their constant failure to evoke adequate responses in the play's characters create an impression of inescapable destiny greater than that suggested by the prophetic dreams of Richard III. In the words of G. Wilson Knight,

> The future is half felt as existing within the

> present and the time-sequence has a secondary reality only. In this way we are shown the essence of destruction, of evil. This essence is not purely human, though it uses humanity; it is contingent on human action, and is therefore not inhuman either. It exists purely as a reciprocity, or relation.[10]

The relationship between the natural and supernatural in Julius Caesar is largely determined by the reaction of the individual characters to the prophetic warnings they receive. The events of the play make it clear that forces are in operation beyond the realm of human action. The victory of evil and destruction is largely the result of the failure of the characters to heed the warnings they are given. The essence of evil as "reciprocity or relation" between the human and praeternatural worlds is a direct result of the character's rejection of the possibility of supernatural monition. In Julius Caesar the alliance with evil is not always a conscious act, but often a submission to fate despite supernatural warnings.

The first dangerous rejection of supernatural monition in Julius Caesar comes with the emperor's first appearance. The circumstances of the rejection are ironic. The scene begins with Caesar's superstitious hope that the barren Calphurnia will "shake off [her] sterile curse" (JC. I. ii. 9), if touched by Anthony in a ritual race. But when the soothsayer breaks into the controlled ritual and disrupts the music with his oracular warning, Caesar refuses to heed him:

> Soothsayer. Beware the ides of March.
> Caesar. What man is that?
> Brutus. A Soothsayer bids you beware the ides of March.
> Caesar. Set him before me; let me see his face.
> Cassius. Fellow, come from the throng; look upon Caesar,
> Caesar. What say'st thou to me now? Speak once again.

Soothsayer. Beware the ides of March.
Caesar. He is a dreamer. Let us leave him.
(JC. I. ii. 18-24).

Although the warning Caesar receives does not come to him in a dream, he immediately relates it to the dream process and makes the fact that the soothsayer is "a dreamer" the principal reason for rejecting his message. Caesar is willing to reveal his superstition publicly, as long as the relationship between the natural and supernatural takes a ritually accepted form. He distrusts the supernatural when it is unbounded by these forms.

The inability to accept the soothsayer's message is closely linked to Caesar's constant emphasis on his public role. Caesar does his best to raise himself above the level of a mere mortal. He is anxious to maintain a public image of complete control and at one point places himself above the gods:

I could be well moved, if I were as you;
If I could pray to move, prayers would move me:
But I am constant as the Northern Star,
Of whose true-fixed and resting quality
There is no fellow in the firmament. . . .
And men are flesh and blood, and apprehensive;
Yet in the number I do know but one
That unassailable holds on his rank,
Unshaked of motion; and that I am he,
Let me a little show it.
(JC. III. i. 58-62; 67-71).

One of the ways in which Caesar attempts to show his constancy and immovability is in his rejection of the unbounded irrational represented by the dreaming soothsayer.

The folly of denying the irrational and inexplicable is made evident by the omens which appear on the tempestuous night before the murder. In their discussion of the strange events both Casca and Cicero offer important insights into the relationship between the natural

and supernatural within the world of the play. After relating the series of omens to Cicero, Casca remarks,

> When these prodigies
> Do so conjointly meet, let not men say
> 'These are their reason--they are natural,'
> For I believe they are portentous things
> Unto the climate that they point upon.
> (JC. I. iii. 28-32).

The audience is aware of the truth of Casca's assertion. The unusual events are "portentous things." But Cicero's point is also well taken:

> Indeed it is a strange-disposed time,
> But men may construe things after their fashion,
> Clean from the purpose of the things themselves.
> (JC. I. iii. 33-35).

Man must be careful not to misinterpret the signs he has been given. The tragic quality of Julius Caesar is in part the result of man's failure to read the signs properly.

The supernatural warnings in Julius Caesar are given in the waking world as well as in dreams. However, the two avenues of supernatural communication are closely linked. The soothsayer is "a dreamer," the portents are given at night, and Cicero's remark is echoed by Decius' response to Calphurnia's dream, "This dream is all amiss interpreted" (JC. II. ii. 83).

In addition to the frequent and unheeded omens of the "real" world, actual dream warnings play an important role in Julius Caesar. Calphurnia is almost successful in convincing her husband to heed the message of her dream. Her near success is due to the fact that Caesar,

> is superstitious grown of late,
> Quite from the main opinion he held once
> Of fantasy, of dreams, and ceremonies. (JC. II. i. 195-97).

Caesar goes so far as to refuse to accompany Decius to the Capital on the basis of his wife's prophetic dream.

> Calphurnia here, my wife, stays me at home.
> She dreamt to-night she saw my statue,
> Which, like a fountain with an hundred spouts,
> Did run pure blood; and many lusty Romans
> Came smiling and did bathe their hands in it.
> And these does she apply for warnings and portents
> And evils imminent, and on her knee
> Hath begged that I will stay at home to-day.

Caesar presents the case to Decius in a manner which is predictable, given the emperor's desire to maintain an aura of complete control. His words imply that he is staying home to calm his wife's foolish fears. Caesar's reaction to the dream of Calphurnia, even before the appearance of Decius, is a denial of the efficacy of prophetic dreams:

> What can be avoided
> Whose end is purposed by the mighty gods?
> Yet Caesar shall go forth.
> (JC. II. ii. 26-28).

Caesar's immediate assumption of his public role with all its blustering bravery suggests an underlying fear of the future which he does not wish to acknowledge. The imperial self-confidence Caesar shows his wife is different from the mood of apprehension he reveals when he is alone:

> Nor heaven nor earth have been at peace to-night.
> Thrice hath Calphurnia in her sleep cried out
> 'Help, ho! They murder Caesar.'
> (JC. II. ii. 1-3).

The approach Decius takes in convincing Caesar to come to the Capitol is aimed at both the emperor's hidden fears and at his desire to maintain the public image of strength and infallibility that Caesar believes he has established. First Decius puts Caesar's own fears to rest by offering an alternative interpretation of the dream. Once the "dream is all amiss interpreted" (JC. II. i.. 83), Decius suggests that Caesar will face public scorn if he does not attend the senate meeting:

> Besides, it were a mock
> Apt to be rendered, for someone to say
> 'Break up the Senate till another time,
> When Caesar's wife shall meet with better dream.'
> (JC. II. ii. 96-99).

The conspirator is aware of Caesar's partially concealed superstition and of his need to maintain the appearance of authority. By manipulating both aspects of the emperor's character, Decius convinces him to disregard the auguries, portents, and Calphurnia's dream.

For those familiar with the history of dream theory, the appearance of the character Artemidorus at the end of the scene subtly underscores the problem of dream interpretation with which Caesar is confronted. The character does appear in Plutarch's account of the assassination.[11] Artemidorus, the dream interpreter, was also known in the Renaissance. But despite the fact that there can be no historical connection between Plutarch's figure and the Artemidorus who wrote the Oneirocritica, the inclusion of the character at this point of the play and in this context suggests a conflation of the two historical figures.[12]

Artemidorus' appearance at a critical point in the development of the action increases the dramatic tension created by the characters' failure to respond to the supernatural communication of dreams and omens. Artemidorus, a character which has probably been introduced with the classical expert on dream interpretation in mind, appears in a world where dreams are "all amiss interpreted." Despite his attempts to make the true meaning of the dreams and omens clear to Caesar, he is disregarded. Artemidorus helps to underscore the importance of dream as a means of communication, while drawing attention to the inaccessibility of the message to those who refuse to hear.

The difficulty in understanding the nature of the relationship

between the natural and supernatural realms continues to plague the play's characters after Caesar's murder. Shakespeare makes it clear that the problem which led to the emperor's downfall extends beyond Caesar's particular case by introducing the parallel situation of Cinna, the poet. Cinna also receives a prophetic dream which he disregards with fatal consequence.

> I dreamt to-night that I did feast with Caesar,
> And things unluckily charge my fantasy.
> I have no will to wander forth of doors,
> Yet something leads me forth.
> (JC. III. iii. 1-4).

Within the context of the play the "something" which leads Cinna to his death against his will seems to be fate.

The episode of Cinna suggests that a man's fate may be unavoidable. If fate cannot be averted within the world of Julius Caesar, the audience is forced to consider the reason for the frequent supernatural warnings. What is the point of the portents, of Calphurnis's dream, and of the soothsayer's message, "Beware the ides of March"?

The persistently disregarded supernatural warnings in Julius Caesar reveal inadequacies in the philosophical approach of the characters. Because the characters disregard the power of the irrational, both inside and outside the human world, they tend to place too much faith in the efficacy of their own wills. Throughout the play attempts are made to control the irrational by means of ritual.[13] But the events prove that the supernatural can no more be contained within these bounds than can the human unconscious. In addition to the reliance on ritual, there is also reliance on philosophical systems which prove to be ineffective.

Brutus, the "honourable man," tries to control events with reason

and stoic self-possession. But Stoicism proves to be an inadequate approach to the world of the play. Brutus sincerely attempts to control the irrational with logic, but he fails. The mob responds to Anthony's appeal to its passion, not Brutus' appeal to its reason. Moreover, his own emotions fail to respond to the dictates of stoic rationality. Brutus cannot calm his own plaguing doubts and fears or soothe his own conscience. He cannot restore himself to peaceful sleep, but finds he is condemned to live a waking life which has become "a phantasma or a hideous dream." (JC. II. i. 65).

The plight of Brutus closely parallels that of Macbeth. Macbeth also fails to deal correctly with the irrational forces of his world and as a result turns his life into "a phantasma or a hideous dream." The play itself has been seen by some critics as a nightmare vision:

> Fear is predominant. Everyone is afraid. There is scarcely a person in the play who does not feel and voice at sometime a sickening, nameless terror. The impact of the play is analogous to nightmare, to which state there are many references.[14]

Shakespeare establishes the nightmare atmosphere in the play's first scene with the initial appearance of the witches. The world to which the audience is introduced by the witches is one of darkness and confusion.

> Fair is foul, and foul is fair.
> Hover through the fog and filthy air.
> (Mac. I. i. 10-11).

As Macbeth later observes, "Nothing is/But what is not" (Mac. I. iii. 141-142), once the praeternatural forces begin to dominate the play.

In Macbeth the "supernatural soliciting" is completely malignant. In Richard III and Julius Caesar spirits come to warn characters of future danger or to condemn them for past evil with the intention of

sparking remorse and repentance. In both plays the failure to heed the benevolent supernatural brings destruction down on the character. However, in Macbeth the situation is reversed. Macbeth's destruction begins because he follows the veiled suggestions of the unnatural hags.

The witches are concrete representatives of the praeternatural, not spirits who communicate through dreams. The audience sees them when no human beings are present on stage. When they confront Macbeth for the first time, Banquo is a witness. But despite their substantiality, the witches do establish a form of communication with Macbeth which is very like that of a dream.

Macbeth's words to Banquo, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen," (Mac. I. iii. 38) echo those of the witches in the play's first scene. When he hears the triple "All hail," his shocked reaction is obvious enough to elicit a comment from Banquo:

> Good sir, why do you start and seem to fear
> Things that do sound so fair?
> (Mac. I. iii. 51-52).

It has long been accepted by critics of the play that Macbeth's startled reaction indicates that the witches have struck upon a secret ambition which the thane has been harbouring for a long time. The unconscious echoing of the phrase "fair is foul and foul is fair" suggests that Macbeth has already allied himself with the chaotic world of evil represented by the witches, on a level of which he may be unaware.

When this critical commonplace is considered in the light of Renaissance dream theory, the form of the "supernatural soliciting" can be seen to have much in common with the praeternatural dream. Just as if Macbeth were a dreamer, the evil forces attempt to manipulate him

through his own unconscious or repressed desires. As Henry Smith remarks, Satan

> marks how every man is inclined, what he loves, what he hateth, what he fears, and what he wants: and when he hath the measure of his foot, then he fits him.[15]

With a little prompting Macbeth soon becomes obsessed by thoughts which had been deeply hidden. The process is identical to that of the operation of demonically-inspired dreams. It is difficult to separate the individual's own evil impulse from the demonic message, since the form of the message is conditioned by the impulse.

The hallucinations which plague Macbeth after his initial confrontation with the witches reinforce the relationship between the praeternaturally inspired visions and demonic dreams. The first hallucination, the dagger Macbeth sees as he moves toward Duncan's chamber, has visible form but lacks substance:

> Is this a dagger which I see before me,
> The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee!
> I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
> Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
> To feel as to sight? or art thou but
> A dagger of the mind, a false creation
> Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
> (Mac. II. i. 33-39).

The dagger of the mind represents an early stage in the process which makes Macbeth's conscious world a living nightmare. The witches have already fed Macbeth's unconscious desires with their prophecy. At this point the unconscious impulse has grown powerful enough to invade Macbeth's waking consciousness with dream visions. The dream process begins to distort his perceptions of the world around him.

The ghost of Banquo, like the dagger, appears to Macbeth in a waking dream. Lady Macbeth herself draws the comparison between the two

incidents:

> This is the very painting of your fear.
> This is the air-drawn dagger which you said
> Led you to Duncan. (Mac. III. iv. 61-63).

However, in this case the supernatural origin of the vision is obvious. Lady Macbeth and her guests may be oblivious of the ghost's presence, but the audience can see him as clearly as it sees Macbeth himself.

The link between dream, hallucination, and the operation of supernatural forces upon the human mind is strengthened by Macbeth's final consultation with the Weird Sisters. The dream-like atmosphere established by the witches' chant pervades the scene, and when the hags communicate with Macbeth it is largely in the symbolic language of dream. His mind has become so closely tied to the evil represented by the witches that it is difficult to determine whether the confrontation takes place in reality or in a dream. The process initiated on the heath has been completed, and Macbeth's consciousness has become dominated by nightmare.

The reaction of Banquo to the initial soliciting permits him to escape Macbeth's fate. Banquo's response to the confrontation with the witches is both a recognition of the true nature of the "supernatural soliciting" and a recognition of the manner in which the danger inherent in such a visitation may be averted:

> Oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
> The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
> Win us with honest trifles, to betray's
> In deepest consequence. (Mac. I. iii. 123-26).

Banquo's second encounter with the Weird Sisters takes the form of an actual dream. He confesses to Macbeth, "I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters" (Mac. II. i. 20). It is not made clear whether the dream is natural or praeternatural. Banquo's following remark,

"To you they have showed some truth" (Mac. II. i. 21), seems to indicate that he has been thinking about the message the witches gave him on the heath. Banquo himself appears to believe his dream is the natural result of his previous experience with the witches rather than a praeternatural visitation. But, whether naturally or praeternaturally inspired, the dreams are forcefully rejected by Banquo:

> A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,
> And yet I would not sleep, Merciful powers,
> Restrain in me the cursèd thoughts that nature
> Gives way to in repose.
> (Mac. II. i. 6-9).

The reaction of Banquo is exactly that recommended by dream theorists. If the dream brings forward evil thoughts, then it must be resisted. Banquo prays that the "cursed thoughts" be restrained in him. Just as Thomas Aquinas advises,[16] he takes the blame for his dreams upon himself and prays for divine assistance in his attempt to gain control over his evil thoughts. The correct response displayed by Banquo is in direct contrast to the approach toward the praeternatural solicitation shown by Macbeth and his wife.

Lady Macbeth actually begs the powers of evil to take possession of her.

> Come, you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
> Of direst cruelty.
> (Mac. I. v. 38-41).

Kenneth Muir points out that

> Just as Shakespeare gave the Weird Sisters supernatural powers . . . so, we must assume, he makes Lady Macbeth a demoniac. She believes that evil spirits can and do take possession of human beings.[17]

Muir emphasizes the importance of Lady Macbeth's belief in the possibility of possession. He suggests that it is relatively

unimportant that the audience believe in the possession. As long as Lady Macbeth believes in it she is able to act ruthlessly, as if she were in a dream.

Although Muir's idea may seem unjustified by evidence in the play itself, the concept can be related to the underlying problem of establishing the correct relationship between the supernatural and natural realms. Once Lady Macbeth commits herself to the murder, she does behave as if she were possessed. However, the demonic condition does not continue, and she is eventually driven mad by the pressure of her own conscience. The "real" Lady Macbeth is painfully aware that "a little water" cannot clear her "of this deed" (Mac. II. ii. 66).

If Muir is correct in his assertion that the possession is nothing more than a psychological justification for an unjustifiable act, then Lady Macbeth's condition before the murder serves as a clear indication of the facility with which praeternatural forces can find access to the unconscious mind. The demonic powers may not take over her body, but they are able to manipulate the evil impulses within the character's own being. Muir's discussion of possession can therefore be developed to reveal a distinct parallel between the case of Macbeth and that of his wife. Both submit, as if in a dream, to the power of evil.

Macbeth's submission to his own impulses under the promptings of the witches and his "demoniac" wife causes him to "murder sleep" and turn his own life and the lives of the people of Scotland into a nightmare. Part of the process of turning the natural world upside-down is Macbeth's own retreat into nightmare fantasy. After the initial confrontation with the witches,

> Macbeth's social encounters are dramatically marked by asides, by his nearly total concentration on

> what he may become, and by his psychological withdrawal from the real world and real people around him.[18]

As the character increasingly becomes the slave of his own psychological obsessions, he falls victim to the nightmare aspects of his own mind and in turn begins to project them on the world around him.

Once the process has been set in motion, "He is helpless as a man in a nightmare: and this helplessness is integral to the conception- the will-concept is absent."[19] Just as in Richard III and Julius Caesar, the problem of the relationship between the supernatural and human realms is bound up with the concepts of fate and free will. Macbeth's will does deteriorate as the play develops. He toys with the idea of murdering the king, then decides to reject the evil thought. However, this act of will is almost immediately negated by Macbeth's submission to his wife's promptings. After he has become king, Macbeth seems to exercise his will in ordering murder after murder to be performed. But, in fact, once he has committed himself to evil he cannot pursue any other course:

> I am in blood
> Stepped in so far that, should I wade no more,
> Returning were as tedious as go o'er.
> (Mac. III. iv. 136-38).

L. C. Knights also discusses Macbeth's sleeplessness and his waking nightmare in terms of the failure of the will. Knights describes Macbeth's evil as

> a stained and unnatural perversion of the will, an obfuscation of the clear light of reason, a principle of disorder (both in the 'single state of man' and in his wider social relations),and a pursuit of illusions.[20]

Macbeth's life has become a dream of carnage and he "is paralysed, mesmerized, as though in a dream."[21]

The relationship between the waking nightmare and Macbeth's sleeplessness relies on the concept of natural sleep as a healing process. Paradoxically, sleep is the only way in which Macbeth could possibly awake from his praeternaturally-inspired nightmare. However, unlike Banquo who attempts to retain control over the pattern of his dreams with divine assistance, Macbeth has surrendered so completely to the praeternatural impulses that it has become impossible for him to control his nightmare. Even the paradoxical possibility of awakening from the nightmare through sleep has been denied him. Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene proves that sleep will only provide another kind of nightmare. G. Wilson Knight is wrong when he says of Macbeth, "the sleepless agony of spiritual decision finds rest and unity in the vaster sleep of death."[22] The audience, aware of Macbeth's conscious surrender to evil, must recognize without being told explicitly that the sleep of death will make Macbeth's nightmare eternal.

The relationship between the praeternatural and the natural worlds in Macbeth is largely defined in terms of nightmare and sleeplessness. The pattern created is therefore one of nightmare, within nightmare, within eternal nightmare. In order to create this pattern Shakespeare relies on the accepted theory that the unconscious mind is closely related to both the supernatural and praeternatural realms.

This Platonic concept also serves as the foundation for the dreams of supernatural revelation in Richard III and Julius Caesar. In all three plays the characters are faced with the problem of consciously dealing with impulses and ideas which can be disregarded as

> the children of an idle brain,
> Begot of nothing but vain fantasy;
> Which is as thin of substance as the air,

> And more inconstant than the wind.
> (Rom. I. iv. 97-100).

Shakespeare, unlike the dream theorists of his age, stresses the folly of treating all dreams as if they were natural processes. It can be argued that this is not necessarily the result of the playwright's philosophical attitude. The appearance of ghosts and witches can be dramatically effective. A great deal of the material Shakespeare works with was borrowed from his sources. And furthermore, there was a well established convention of prophetic dreams in the Elizabethan theater.

After all these factors are taken into consideration, Shakespeare still seems to have a thematic purpose for the frequent use of dream as a means of communication with the supernatural and praeternatural realms of existence. Although only three examples have been examined in this chapter, the problems presented by Richard III, Julius Caesar and Macbeth, are recurrent. In Hamlet, for example, one of the principal reasons for the protagonist's hesitation is apparently his desire to be sure that the ghost is not a demon sent to persuade him to perform an act which will damn him. And although others see the ghost at the beginning of the play, its appearance in Gertrude's bedchamber can be seen as a type of dream vision comparable to Macbeth's "daggers of the mind."

The emphasis on moral freedom in the face of destiny provides the key to Shakespeare's thematic use of the supernatural and praeternatural dream. Events are often beyond the character's control, but the individual's response to his circumstances is always a matter of free will, at least until the time at which he freely chooses to make a total commitment to evil. The sleeping man is vulnerable to the

pressure of a whole universe of supernatural forces, but the ultimate choice is always his. The correct choice is always essential.

Chapter VI: Dream, Art and Metamorphosis

Although many Shakespearean characters fail to respond adequately to the insight they are given in their dreams, there are several plays in which characters are psychologically or spiritually transformed by the processes of sleep and dream. Often the transformation which takes place is one which does not rely on the character's conscious acceptance of the power of the process. Unlike the supernaturally-inspired dreams discussed in the last chapter, the transforming dream, whether the source is natural or supernatural, does not require understanding but submission. The characters are changed by their experience, but it is not a change which results from a conscious moral choice.

Perhaps the most important example of psychological transformation through the processes of sleep and dream is the restoration of Lear's sanity. It has often been pointed out that Lear and the parallel character, Gloucester, are forced by circumstances to recognize their blindness before they are able to see clearly. The physical blinding of Gloucester emphasizes the inability of both he and Lear to see things as they really are. The frequent references to eyes and to sight as well as the concrete representation of blindness by the eyeless Gloucester support the critical approach which interprets the action of King Lear as a painful but necessary growth in insight on the part of both Gloucester and Lear.[1]

Sleep itself is represented only twice in the play, but just as in Macbeth, there is a strong correspondence between the play's central action and the state of nightmare. Madness is a surrender to the unconscious mind parallel in many ways to dream. Lear recognizes that

madness is submission to unconscious impulses:

> Hysterica passio, down, thou climbing sorrow;
> Thy element's below. (Lr. II. iv. 55-56).[2]

When "hysterica passio" finally overcomes Lear's conscious mind, he finds himself the companion of a fool and another madman and begins to act out a fantasy trial that is much like a dream.

The scene in which Lear plays out the trial with the Fool and Tom o'Bedlam, recalls the words of Theseus in his reponse to the dream of the lovers in A Midsummer Night's Dream:

> Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
> Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
> More than cool reason ever comprehends.
> The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact. (MND. V. i. 4-8).

Lear may not be a lover, but the scene shows him in the role of both a madman and a poet. He shapes his fantasy into a play and participates as one of the actors.

In his madness Lear seems to believe that he can force even the elements themselves to obey his commands and participate in his nightmare fantasy of destruction:

> Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks. Rage, blow,
> You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
> Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks
> You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,
> Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
> Singe my white head. (Lr. III. ii. 1-6)

Lear's attempt to command the elements, like his attempt to command the love of his daughters, is an aspect of his blindness to his own limitations. However, his desire to give form to his destructive fantasies is part of the purging process of his madness. Although the fantasies are a reflection of Lear's limited understanding, they help him to objectify his "hysterica passio" and therefore function as an

important element in his psychological transformation.

The externalization of Lear's fantasies contributes to the development of the dream-like atmosphere associated with his madness, but much of the nightmare quality of his world is dependent upon the presence of the Fool and Tom o' Bedlam. Both characters speak to Lear in language that seems confused and senseless. However, just as the symbolic language of dreams reveals a hidden meaning behind nonsense, the words of the Fool and "poor Tom" present the truth in a confused form. Lear is unable to see the truth behind the taunting of his Fool until he gives way to madness and becomes an active participant in the dream-like world of the unconscious. He does not understand the dream language until he becomes part of the dream.

Lear's madness may be akin to the realm of dreams, but his grief has barred him from the healing powers of natural sleep. Like Macbeth, he "lacks the season of all natures, sleep" (Mac. III. iv. 141). His grief has caused him "on the torture of the mind to lie/In restless ecstasy" (Mac. III. ii. 21-22). Nightmare has left its natural realm and torments him in his waking hours. But Lear's sleeplessness is very different from Macbeth's in its source and function. Macbeth is disturbed by his conscience. Lear is disturbed by a sudden confrontation with an unsuspected and painful truth. Macbeth's response is to lay his conscience to rest. As a result he loses the moral freedom of a man and reacts to his circumstances like a beast:

> They have tied me to a stake. I cannot fly,
> But bear-like I must fight the course.
> (Mac. V. vii. 1-2).

In contrast, Lear responds to his living nightmare with a growth in understanding and insight. He is transformed by his experience, and

when the process is completed, he is reawakened by a healing sleep.

Shakespeare brings together several symbols of reintegration, harmony, and wholeness in the reawakening of Lear. The angelic Cordelia, the doctor, the healing power of nature, music and sleep all work together to restore Lear to his sanity. In contrast to the destructive powers of nature called upon by Lear on the heath, the Doctor and Cordelia call upon the fertile and creative powers of nature to awaken Lear from his nightmare:

> Doctor; Our foster nurse of nature is repose,
> The which he lacks. That to provoke in him
> Are many simples operative, whose power
> Will close the eye of anguish.
> Cordelia. All blessed secrets,
> All you unpublished virtues of the earth,
> Spring with my tears; be aidant and remediate
> In the good man's distress.
> (Lr. IV. iv. 12-18).

Music plays an important part in Lear's restoration. Lear's madness itself is seen as a dissonance. Cordelia prays,

> O you kind gods,
> Cure this great breach in his abusèd nature!
> Th' untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up
> Of this child-changed father!

The harmony of music helps to tune Lear's senses and to bring harmony to his thoughts. Music and sleep are frequently brought together in Shakespeare's work. Not only in King Lear, but also in A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Tempest, and Julius Caesar, sleep and music are paired concepts.[3]

In Julius Caesar, the undisturbed sleep of the boy, Lucius, is employed as a contrast to the wakefulness of Brutus. While Brutus suffers in a "phantasma, or a hideous dream" (JC. II. i. 65). the child is at rest. Brutus himself notes the contrast of their states:

> Boy! Lucius! Fast asleep? It is no matter.
> Enjoy the honey-heavy dew of slumber.
> Thou hast no figures nor no fantasies
> Which busy care draws in the brains of men;
> Therefore thou sleep'st so sound.
> (JC. II. i. 229-33).

Lucius and Brutus are contrasted for the second time in the scene in which Caesar's ghost appears. In this instance the peaceful sleep of Lucius is emphasized by the boy's association with music. Hoping to calm his own anxiety, Brutus asks Lucius to play for him:

> Bear with me, good boy. I am much forgetful.
> Canst thou hold up thy heavy eyes awhile,
> And touch thy instrument a strain or two?
> (JC. Iv. iii. 255-57).

But the music only serves to put the musician to sleep. The "honey-heavy dew of slumber" has been altered to the "leaden mace" of sleep in Brutus' imagination:

> This is a sleepy tune. O murd'rous slumber!
> Layest thou thy leaden mace upon my boy,
> That plays thee music? Gentle knave, good night.
> I will not do thee so much wrong to wake thee.
> (JC. Iv. iii. 267-70).

The alteration in Brutus' metaphors of sleep suggests the depth of his own anxiety. His dismay at his own sleeplessness colours his attitude toward the healing qualities of "murd'rous slumber," but he still perceives sleep as a positive force, a state of which he will not deprive his page.

The failure of music to restore harmony to the mind of Brutus, emphasizes the psychological discord that bars him from a peaceful sleep. The effect of the pairing of music and sleep is therefore different from that of King Lear. In Julius Caesar, all the major characters misunderstand the world around them. None comes to a clear recognition of his limited perception.[4] Lear's ability to

respond to sleep and to music is a sign of the growth in his understanding of the nature of reality. Although the response to music differs in the two tragedies, in each music is linked to both sleep and accurate perception.

In both The Tempest and A Midsummer Night's Dream, music is used as a magic charm which lulls the characters to sleep and aids in their transformation. In order to facilitate the transition from the dream-world of the forest to the "reality" of the Athenian world, Oberon suggests that Bottom and the lovers be put into a deep sleep with the help of music:

> Titania, music call, and strike more dead
> Than common sleep of these five the sense.
> (MND. IV. i. 80-81).

In The Tempest Prospero's

> isle is full of noises,
> Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.
> (Tmp. III. ii. 132-33).

Once again music is closely associated with sleep and dream. Even the bestial Caliban is so charmed by the sounds of the island he confesses,

> That, if I then had waked after long sleep, they
> Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
> The clouds methought would open and show riches
> Ready to drop upon me, that, when I waked,
> I cried to dream again.
> (Tmp. III. ii. 136-40).

The pairing of sleep and music in Shakespeare's work is one aspect of the relationship established between art and the illusory quality of dream. The play metaphor and the play within a play are also frequently used in conjunction with the concepts of sleep and dream. Often the play itself is shown to be a dream, and like the illusion of dream the play often provides the viewer with insight into

a form of reality his limited waking perception has never allowed him to see.[5]

The play-acting of Lear previously discussed is one example of the externalization of dream through drama. Like the music which restores the King's internal harmony, the play helps him to make sense of the devastating truth with which he is confronted. The illusion is an essential element in the process of Lear's transformation.

The Taming of the Shrew provides another important example of the correspondence between dream and drama. Christopher Sly's transformation from a beggar to a lord is accompanied by music and takes the form of a dramatic production. The real lord makes the connection between sleep, dream, madness, and the arts explicit. He commands his servants,

> Procure me music ready when he wakes
> To make a dulcet and a heavenly sound.
> And if he chance to speak, be ready straight,
> And with a low submissive reverence
> Say, 'What is it your honor will command?' . . .
> Persuade him that he hath been lunatic,
> And when he says he is, say that he dreams,
> For he is nothing but a mighty lord.
> (Shr. Ind. i. 48-52; 61-62).

Under the pressure of the dramatic illusion, Sly loses the sense of his own identity and submits to the notion that he is a lord:

> Am I a lord, and have I such a lady?
> Or do I dream? Or have I dreamed till now?
> I do not sleep: I see, I hear, I speak,
> I smell sweet savors and I feel soft things.
> Upon my life, I am a lord indeed,
> And not a tinker nor Christopher Sly.
> (Shr. Ind. ii. 66-71).

It is clear from the beginning of the play that all is not as it seems and that a great deal of insight is required in order to distinguish illusion from reality.

The play performed for Sly deals with the problems suggested in the induction. The story of The Taming of the Shrew is based on the idea of transformation. Although the taming of Kate appears to be an alchemical transformation of base metal into gold, it is actually the revelation of the reality behind an illusion in which everyone, including Kate herself, has believed. The sweet Bianca, beloved by everyone, proves to be the real shrew.

Since transformation has been linked with both dream and drama, and since the induction draws the audience's attention to the dramatic nature of the story presented, the taming of Kate can be seen as a dream within Sly's dream. Another layer of illusion is added to the structure by Petruchio's method of taming his shrewish wife. He insists on the power of his own mind to shape reality as he wishes. Even the sun is subject to change in response to Petruchio's imagination:

> Now by my mother's son, and that's myself,
> It shall be moon or star or what I list.
> (Shr. IV. v. 6-7).

Petruchio constantly defies apparent reality and imaginatively recreates the world around him. He is not deceived by the illusions he creates because he creates them consciously. He admits his defiance of reality in his courtship of Kate:

> Say that she rail, why then I'll tell her plain
> She sings as sweetly as a nightingale.
> Say that she frown, I'll say she looks as clear
> As morning roses newly washed with dew.
> Say she be mute and will not speak a word,
> Then I'll commend her volubility
> And say she uttereth piercing eloquence.
> (Shr. II. i. 170-76).

As Petruchio shapes his world he creates a drama of his own within the play. Like the lord of the induction, he uses the dream world of

imagination to bring about a seemingly impossible transformation.

The transforming power of artistic illusion is linked with that of dream because of their mutual dependence on the human imagination.

> Like Elizabethans in general, the dramatists believed and often explicitly stated that dreams are the faculty of the mind whose primary function is to preserve and recombine images which have been apprehended by the external senses. The identification of dreams with the imagination is significant, for according to Renaissance psychology the imagination is the faculty which serves as a link between the natural soul of man . . . and the sensitive and vegetative, or irrational, souls. . . .[6]

Often Shakespeare blurs the boundary between what the rational soul considers to be reality and what it considers to be illusion. As a result, reality is shown to be an ambiguous concept. There is more to reality than the reasonable man comprehends, and frequently a dreamer, a poet, a madman, or a lover is able to "apprehend more than cool reason." The imagination acts as a bridge between the rational and the irrational. The spiritual and psychological insight made possible by the "illusion" of dream and of art permits a transformation of the individual based on a deeper insight into the nature of "reality."

The Platonic branch of Renaissance psychology sees this insight as more than a Lockean recombination of images. As the supernaturally-inspired dreams in Shakespeare show, dreams sometimes provide a glimpse into the immortal realm of the spirit. Both A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Tempest explore the relationship between illusion and reality and suggest the transforming power of dream in terms of the possibility of spiritual insight.

An important aspect of A Midsummer Night's Dream is the emphasis placed upon man's limited perception. The point of view represented

by the Athenian world in the play corresponds to the audience's usual conception of reality. Theseus, the cool-headed and reasonable ruler of Athens, is often considered by critics as the standard of common sense, against which the young lovers are measured and in comparison with whom they are found to be foolish and inadequate.[7] However, the events of the play show that the "cool reason" and common sense of Theseus seriously limit his perception of reality beyond the commonplace. As Garber remarks,

> if illusion and the imagination are not without their dangers, they are nonetheless, in terms of this play, perferable to their radical opposite, "cool reason" in Theseus' phrase.[8]

Theseus is about to be married and is impatient for his wedding day to arrive:

> Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
> Draws on apace. Four happy days bring in
> Another moon; but O, methinks, how slow
> This old moon wanes! She lingers my desires.
> (MND. I. i. 1-4).

Although his feelings are similar to those of the young lovers, he restrains his emotion and forces it into a pattern of ritual and formality. He will wed Hippolyta "with pomp, with triumph, and with revelling" (MND. I. i. 19). The emotional restraint of Theseus contrasts with the uncontrolled feelings of the young lovers.

This restraint on the part of Theseus may be commendable. However, it seems to contribute to the ruler's inability to make the imaginative connection between his own feelings and those of Hermia and Lysander. Despite the fact that he is in love himself, Theseus shows no sympathy for the plight of the young lovers and offers Hermia a choice amongst three unsatisfactory alternatives. His decree condemns the girl to the sterility of chastity or death if she will not accept the emotional

sterility of a marriage forced upon her by her father and the state.

The lack of understanding, imagination, and human sympathy Theseus displays in the play's first scene, are reflected in his deprecation of the lovers' vision in the last act. He does not believe in the experience they relate to him and sees their story as "more strange than true" (MND. V. i. 2). Theseus has little patience with the "airy nothing" fabricated by the imagination. He is right when he says that

> Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
> Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
> More than cool reason ever comprehends.
> The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact.
> (MND. V. i. 4-8).

Since Theseus is in love himself, his rejection of the power of imagination serves once again to remind the audience of his limited understanding of human feeling and of the dimensions of reality beyond the walls of Athens.

The irrationality of the young lovers contrasts with the "cool reason" of Theseus. But their perception is as limited as that of the Duke. They are unable to recognize their own irrationality. Bottom's insightful remark, that "reason and love keep little company together nowadays" (MND. III. i. 130-31) is shown to be true by means of the confusion to which the young people become subject in the wood. Lysander's defense of his change of heart humorously reveals the irrationality of love:

> The will of man is by his reason swayed,
> And reason says you are the worthier maid.
> Things growing are not ripe until their season:
> So I, being young, till now not ripe to reason.
> And touching now the point of human skill,
> Reason becomes the marshal to my will.
> (MND. II. ii. 115-20).

The audience is aware of the futility of a reliance on the dictates of reason under the circumstances in which Lysander finds himself. As a lover he is a dreamer, and in the wood he is a dreamer who is living a dream within a dream. In her discussion of the play Garber remarks,

> Reason has no place in the dream state, which possesses an innate logic of its own and when characters attempt to employ it, they frustrate their own ends.[9]

All of the lovers are forced to cope with the confusion of the dream state, but none has perception keen enough to recognize that reason will not serve to unravel the irrational tangle in which they find themselves.

In A Midsummer Night's Dream the references to hearing and sight establish the limits of human perception in a manner similar to the use of vision references in King Lear. Hermia follows Lysander with the reasonable belief that he is still true to her. But her limited perception of the situation and her reason lead her astray:

> Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,
> The ear more quick of apprehension makes.
> Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,
> It pays the hearing double recompense.
> Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found;
> Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.
> (MND. III. ii. 177-82).

Hermia's hearing may be acute enough to lead her to Lysander, but neither her hearing nor her eyesight help her to perceive correctly the unreasonable reality she finds in the dream world of the Athenian wood.

Even the immortal fairy queen, Titania, suffers from a distorted perception of reality within the dream imposed upon her by Oberon's love potion. The sound of the ass-headed Bottom's song cannot be

aesthetically pleasing, yet Titania begs her new love,

> I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again.
> Mine ear is much enamored of thy note;
> So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
> And thy fair virtue's force (perforce) doth move me,
> On the first view, to say, to swear, I love thee.
> (MND. III. i. 124-28).

It is little wonder that Bottom responds,

> Methink, mistress, you should have little
> reason for that. And yet, to say the truth,
> reason and love keep little company nowadays.
> (MND. III. i. 129-31).

Bottom actually appears to be the only individual in the dream world at the play's core to perceive his situation correctly. He realizes that Titania's love is unreasonable and, despite the self-centeredness he displays earlier in the play, he also realizes that he is not as wise as Titania believes him to be. Moreover, he is the only mortal who actually sees the fairies; but as G. K. Hunter points out, "The advantage he has over the lovers is illusory, for he cannot make use of it."[10]

In addition to his inability to make use of those things he does understand, there is an essential flaw in Bottom's perception, a flaw the audience is unable to overlook. He does not know that he is an ass. The use of the ass's head as a visual metaphor for Bottom's silly self-importance directly relates the action to the process of dream. The truth is made clear through symbol. No matter how level-headed Bottom may appear to be, it remains clear to everyone but Bottom and the charmed Titania that he is an ass.

The limited perception of Bottom is not only emphasized by his failure to realize that he is an ass, but also by the confusion of the senses both in the memory of his dream and in the play which the rustics

present to the Duke. It has often been pointed out that the language Bottom uses when he recalls his dream is a parody of the words of St. Paul:[11]

> Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (1 Cor. 2:9).

Bottom confuses the vision completely:

> I have had a most rare vision. I have had dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream. Me thought I was--there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, and methought I had--But man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was. (MND. IV. i. 203-11).

Bottom's dream is a vision that has such depth that "It shall be called 'Bottom's Dream,' because it hath no bottom." (MND. IV. i. 212-13). But although Bottom recognizes that he has had an important experience, he has missed the meaning. He cannot grasp the nature of the new dimension of reality to which his dream has exposed him. The ass's head of Bottom not only serves as visible evidence of his foolish behavior, it also marks him as a "natural man," one who lives on a level close to that of a beast. In the chapter of Corinthians quoted above Paul also says of the spiritual vision,

> But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1. Cor. 2:14).

Bottom's experience does not significantly change him. When he awakens he still behaves like an ass. The only noticeable difference

in the character is that his confusion is increased by his encounter with the spirit world of the fairies:

> Masters, I am to discourse wonders; but ask
> me not what. For if I tell you, I am not true
> Athenian. I will tell you everything, right
> as it fell out. (MND. IV. ii. 26-28).

In the performance of the "tedious brief scene" (MND. V. i. 56) of Pyramus and Thisby, Bottom confuses the functions of the senses once again:

> I see a voice. Now will I to the chink,
> To spy an I can hear my Thisby's face.
> (MND. V. i. 190-91).

The confusion serves both to emphasize the limitations of perception which depends on the senses alone and to remind the audience of Bottom's misquotation of Saint Paul.

The reminder of the Biblical reference indicates the importance of the passage to the development of the theme of perception. When considered in conjunction with other Biblical allusions in the play the concept of spiritual perception as opposed to natural perception becomes an important aspect of the drama. The references to snakes in both Hermia's dream and Oberon's description of Titania's bower subtly suggest the fall of man. The trumpets which awake the dreamers serve as a reminder of the last judgement. In the words of G. Wilson Knight,

> In this dawn the lovers wake to Theseus'
> hunting horns, the daily trumpet of life
> dispelling death . . . [12]

The play therefore suggests that the dream world of the lovers encompasses all of human life from the creation and fall of man to the final judgement. The action is indeed a representation of Prospero's words,

We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep. (Tmp. IV. i. 156-58).

The Athenian wood is a realm dominated by supernatural forces beyond the natural perception of most of the mortals who enter. However, this does not imply that Oberon, the controlling spiritual presence in the play, is a representation of God. Oberon and his servant, Puck, have limitations of their own. The mistakes made in the administration of the love potion are the result of these limitations. But despite Titania's distorted perception, Oberon's manipulations, and Puck's mischievous delight in his own errors, the fairies are shown to be real supernatural forces with a great deal of power. Their marital discord influences nature herself:

> Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
> As in revenge, have sucked up from the sea
> Contagious fogs; which falling in the land
> Hath every pelting river made so proud
> That they have overborne their continents.
> (MND. II. i. 88-92).[13]

The power of the fairies and their association with dream and illusion creates an interesting structural pattern in the play.[14] At the play's core is the Athenian wood, an illusory realm dominated by spiritual beings. Outside the wood is Athens itself, a reasonable and realistic world in which the insights of the forest are disregarded as products of wild imagination. However, the world of Athens itself is dominated by the invisible spirits of Oberon and his fairies. Reality is bound on both sides by "illusion." And beyond the world of the play there is another level of reality, recognized by the fairies themselves in Puck's address to the audience:

> If we shadows have offended,
> Think but this, and all is mended--

> That you have but slumb'red here
> While these visions did appear.
> And this weak and idle theme,
> No more yielding but a dream.
> (MND. V. i. 412-17).

The audience is invited to think of itself as a body of dreamers who may be encompassed by yet another sphere of "illusion" or a greater spiritual reality. As Young remarks,

> This is not merely a trick or a display of artistic ingenuity; treating us as it does to an expansion of consciousness and a series of epistemological discoveries, it suggests that our knowledge of the world is less reliable than it seems.[15]

Because the play as a whole has developed the concept of man's limited perception of reality, the members of the audience are finally forced to recognize that this limitation extends to themselves and to their understanding of what constitutes illusion and reality.

The play-within-a-play performed by the rustics emphasizes the association between the illusion of art and the illusion of dream discussed earlier in the chapter in relation to The Taming of the Shrew. In A Midsummer Night's Dream the players are so convinced by the power of the illusion they create that they are concerned that the lion may be mistaken for a real lion and that the deaths may be as shocking to the audience as actual deaths. The silliness of Bottom and his friends draws attention to the illusory quality of the play's central action and forces the audience to acknowledge that, just as Puck says, they are dreamers absorbed in the illusion of A Midsummer Night's Dream. In this play, like the other plays discussed, the relationship established between the dream and a work of art serves to emphasize the power of both mediums to reveal truths beyond man's ordinary and reasonable understanding of reality. The revelation of

these truths marks the first step toward transformation.

Critics debate the importance of the concept of transformation in A Midsummer Night's Dream. C. L. Barber says of the play,

> The woods are established as a region of metamorphosis, where in liquid moonlight or glimmering starlight, things can change, merge, and melt into each other. Metamorphosis expresses both what love sees and what it seeks to do.[16]

An alternative point of view is expressed by G. K. Hunter:

> On the whole the characters remain fixed in their attitudes; those who change, like Demetrius, Lysander, and Titania, are lifted bodily, without conflict of character and without volition, from one attitude to another.[17]

Since the lovers are not deeply characterized it is difficult to determine if their experience has resulted in personal transformation. Bottom is certainly not regenerated by his encounter with Titania. And Titania herself seems little changed by her dream. However, there is an important pattern of transformation affected by the dream. Chaos is resolved into order. Concord arises from discord. When Oberon commands that the fairy music be played to charm the lovers into deep sleep, harmony is restored to the world of the play.

A similar pattern is established in The Tempest. In Shakespeare's last play disorder is again resolved into order through the dual processes of dream and art. The play itself has often been seen as a dream. In fact, a recent book on The Tempest is entitled The Dream of Prospero.[18] The manner in which the material of the play is presented encourages this point of view:

> The island is a world of fluid, merging states of being and forms of life. This lack of dependable boundaries between states

> is also expressed by the many instances of confusion between natural and divine.[19]

From the beginning of the play reality is seen to be largely determined by individual perception. Moreover, just as in A Midsummer Night's Dream, this perception is shown to be limited. The characters on board the ship bound for Italy believe wholeheartedly that they are about to be wrecked by the storm. Until Prospero explains that this is not the case, the audience also believes that the tempest is real and that the ship is endangered. As a result, the audience is made subject to the illusion of dream and art from the play's first scene. For the audience as well as the characters,

> The world that common sense regards as real, of order in nature and society and of sanity in the individual is a shimmering transformation of disorder.[20]

Miranda's sleepiness during her father's long expository speech in part serves as a comic device to alleviate possible boredom in the audience.[21] But her reaction also serves to draw the audience's attention to the fact that the past events of the real world are like a dream to Miranda. She herself says,

> 'Tis far off,
> And rather like a dream than an assurance
> That my remembrance warrants.
> (Tmp. I. ii. 44-46).

For Miranda the real world of political intrigue lies "In the dark backward and abysm of time" (Tmp. I. ii. 50). Just as in A Midsummer Night's Dream, the boundary between illusion and reality breaks down early in The Tempest.

Miranda finds it difficult to cast her mind into the reality of the "dark backward and abysm of time," but characters shipwrecked on

Prospero's island experience an even greater difficulty when they attempt to discern the nature of the new reality with which they are confronted. The manner in which the characters perceive the reality of the island is largely determined by their own disposition. Each man projects himself onto the environment and sincerely believes that the reflections of his own mind are substantial facts. As a result, the comments of the shipwrecked men reveal more about their individual natures than they reveal about the nature of the island:

> Adrian. The air breathes upon us here most sweetly.
> Sebastian. As if it had lungs, and rotten ones.
> Antonio. Or as 'twere perfumed by a fen.
> Gonzalo. Here is everything advantageous to life.
> Antonio. True; save means to live.
> Sebastian. Of that there's none, or little.
> Gonzalo. How lush and lusty the grass looks! How green!
> Antonio. The ground indeed is tawny.
> Sebastian. With an eye of green in't.
> Antonio. He misses not much.
> Sebastian. No; he doth but mistake the truth totally.
> (Tmp. II. i. 46-56).

Each man's perception of reality is shown to be a personal dream. None of the men, not even the goodhearted Gonzalo, understands the nature of the world he has entered. They all "mistake the truth totally."

The limitations of perception also extend to the island's own inhabitants. The innocence of Miranda which leads her to mistake Ferdinand for a god is no more in accord with the truth than is the perception of Caliban, coloured by his inherent evil. Miranda's dream is far more appealing than that of the monster, but it is nevertheless a mistaken attitude which must be transformed by the power of the dream Prospero imposes. As Bonamy Dobrée remarks,

> Every now and again the people in the play are deluded as to what they see, or see only what

> they wish to see, or even see what is not there. All the time there is a suggestion of unreality, or living in a dream world.[22]

It is Prospero's aim to restore a recognition of reality to all the characters who are able to accept the truth. In the process, Prospero himself experiences a transformation of sorts in his recognition that "the rarer action is/In virtue than in vengence." (Tmp. V. i. 27-28).

Caliban is not able to be regenerated by the power of Prospero. His bestiality and his evil are inherent characteristics that cannot be altered. In contrast to Ariel, he seems to represent man's bestial as opposed to man's spiritual nature. Caliban is a more forceful example of the natural man than the ass-headed Bottom. Like Bottom, Caliban is an object of comedy. But unlike the rustic, the monster is unable to win the sympathy of the audience. The man who watches the performance of Bottom recognizes a man much like himself. Caliban's bestiality is a condensation of much that man tries to overcome in his own nature.

Caliban's perpetual servility despite his professed desire for freedom is a clear representation of the natural man who is a slave to his own nature. Shakespeare does not permit the members of the audience to forget that the monster he represents does have some relation to themselves. Trinculo's remarks draw the audience into this aspect of the dream:

> What have we here? A man or a fish? Dead or alive? A fish: he smells like a fish; a very ancient and fishlike smell; a kind of not of the newest Poor-John. A strange fish! Were I in England now, as once I was, and had but this fish painted, not a holiday fool there but would give a piece of silver. There would this monster make a man: any strange beast there makes a man. (Tmp. II. ii. 24-30).

Despite Caliban's bestiality and his close association with the lowest men present on the island, Stephano and Trinculo, he is not totally immune to the dream-like beauty of art. The conspirators are unable to find the proper tune for their song and are afraid when they hear Ariel play for them. The reaction to the harmony of music reveals the immunity of Stephano and Trinculo to the transforming power of art. Although Caliban is also unable to receive the blessing of transformation within the play, his speech indicates the pain of an unconsciously perceived beauty which lies just out of reach. Just as Ferdinand's love is made to blossom with Miranda beyond his reach, "lest too light winning/Make the prize light" (Tmp. I. ii. 452-53), the value of the transforming beauty is emphasized by Caliban's inability to grasp it completely:

> Be not afeared: the isle is full of noises,
> Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.
> Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
> Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices
> That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
> Will make me sleep again; and then, in dreaming,
> The clouds methought would open and show riches
> Ready to drop upon me, that, when I waked,
> I cried to dream again. (Tmp. III. ii. 132-140).

However, Caliban's ability to perceive the beauty that surrounds him suggests that it is possible for even the monster to experience transformation through self-transcendence. The poetic beauty of the speech suggests the inspiring power of art. Caliban's language usually reflects his bestiality, but even the remembrance of the island music has the effect of elevating the monster's thought and language.

Ariel, the source of this music, is closely connected with art throughout the play. Without the help of Ariel, Prospero would not be able to stage the complex drama which takes place on his island. The

plays within the larger play are also dependent upon Ariel's cooperation with Prospero. The banquet presented to the shipwrecked men, like the wedding masque later in the play, is a dream-like illusion created by both the Duke and his servant. It is Ariel who actually confronts the men with their own evil and forces them to face the reality of their situation:

> You are three men of sin, whom destiny--
> That hath to instrument this lower world
> And what is in't--the never-surfeited sea
> Hath caused to belch up you, on this island,
> Where man doth not inhabit, you 'mongst men
> Being most unfit to live.
> (Tmp. III. iii. 53-58).

Ariel's close association with art, his Protean qualities, and his desire for freedom suggest that the figure is representative of a particular aspect of man's spiritual nature, the imagination. Like Caliban, Ariel is more than a simple allegorical figure. Nevertheless, his predominant characteristics, and his relationship to Prospero, a character often associated with Shakespeare himself, suggest that he is a visual representation of the power of the imagination. His confrontation with the shipwrecked nobility in the passage quoted above reveals an important aspect of the concept of spiritual transformation in The Tempest. If Ariel is seen as the spirit of imagination, then the passage in which the conflicting perceptions of reality are resolved by a vision of the truth indicates that the imagination is able to extend the boundaries of human perception. Theseus may be correct when he says, "The lunatic, the lover, and the poet/Are of imagination all compact" (MND. V. i. 7-8), but in The Tempest as well as in A Midsummer Night's Dream, the imaginative vision of the lunatic, lover, and madman is shown to be reality rather than illusion. Ariel

helps his master reveal reality to the characters. The revelation is the first step in the healing process.

The characters who slept at the beginning of the play are those who are able to accept the transformation offered them by their confrontation with reality. Sebastian and Antonio are not significantly altered by their experience because, like Caliban, they are prisoners of their own evil. However, Alonso is changed, and with his power forces conformity to the natural order upon the unrepentant characters. In The Tempest, as in A Midsummer Night's Dream, the most significant transformation is the resolution of discord into harmony. However, personal regeneration is shown to be an important aspect of the transforming power of the imaginative vision in Shakespeare's last play.

The characters are "spell-stopped" (Tmp. V. i. 61) and forced into a sleep which parallels the sleep enforced by Ariel earlier in the play. When the charm dissolves and they are restored to reason, the characters awaken from the dream that began with the tempest:

> The charm dissolves apace;
> And as the morning steals upon the night,
> Melting the darkness, so their rising senses
> Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle
> Their clearer reason. (Tmp. V. i. 64-68).

As a result of their dream:

> Their understanding
> Begins to swell, and the approaching tide
> Will shortly fill the reasonable shore,
> That now lies foul and muddy. (Tmp. V. i. 79-82).

Gonzalo's amazement at the process which he and the others have undergone is the result of a clear perception of what the dream has really accomplished:

> In one voyage
> Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis,
> And Ferdinand her brother found a wife
> Where he himself was lost; Prospero his dukedom
> In a poor isle; and all of us ourselves
> When no man was his own. (Tmp. V. i. 208-13).

In the world of dream the characters lose their identities only to find their true selves when they awaken. In The Tempest, A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Taming of the Shrew, paradoxically "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life . . . shall find it." (Mt. 10:39).

The overlapping realms of dream and art in The Tempest are shown to be full of beauty and healing power. Prospero's remarks after the wedding masque must be considered in the context of this positive vision:

> These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits and
> Are melted into air, into thin air;
> And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capped tow'rs, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
> And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep. (Tmp. IV. i. 148-58).

Despite the fact that Prospero immediately remarks,

> Sir I am vexed.
> Bear with my weakness; my old brain is troubled.
> (Tmp. IV. i. 158-9),

the passage cannot be seen as a reflection of pessimism on the part of Prospero. The negative interpretation proposed by Alex Aronson is misleading: he believes that,

> Prospero's despondent thought, "We are such stuff as dreams are made on" gently hints at the inconsistencies and equivocations, dark forebodings and questionings, which human

> consciousness, when wide awake, discovers in the stuff of which dreams are made.[23]

Aronson, like a character from Julius Caesar, has "misconstrued everything" (JC. V. iii. 84).

Another critic, S. L. Bethell, offers an interpretation of the passage which not only takes account of the total vision presented in the play, but also of the attitude toward sleep and dream which is expressed throughout Shakespeare's work.

> To Prospero whose "beating mind" (Tmp. IV. i. 163) achieves at this moment an insight into reality, the transitoriness of this world is matter for cheerfulness. We are therefore justified in pushing the parallel farther, and remembering that, though the actors have faded, as invisible spirits they still exist; and that from sleep there is awakening. Sleep, in Shakespeare, is always regarded as remedial.[24]

Prospero's words indicate that he is the only mortal character in the play who perceives the true nature of reality. As a magician, an artist and a character who has often been seen as a representation of Shakespeare himself, it is Prospero's responsibility to reveal the truth of his vision to those around him so that they can be transformed and find themselves, "When no man was his own" (Tmp. V. i. 213).

Chapter V: Conclusion

Not only do the concepts of sleep and dream appear frequently in Shakespeare's drama, but in several of the plays, such as A Midsummer Night's Dream, Macbeth, and The Tempest, the playwright gives both sleep and dream special emphasis. The traditional theories explaining the significance and function of the processes of sleep and dream provided Shakespeare with ideas which he was able to exploit in a variety of ways. Because both the Aristotelian explanation of sleep and dream as exclusively physical and psychological processes, and the Platonic belief in the possibility of supernatural communication and heightened spiritual perception were accepted during the Renaissance, Shakespeare was able to use both traditions in the construction of the plays.

Sleep and dream serve a wide variety of functions in Shakespeare's work. The playwright seems to have exploited the concepts as technical devices in almost every conceivable manner. Sleep and dream serve as methods of characterization, as structural principles, as symbols of innocence and of guilt, and as a convenient means of furthering the development of the action. When the concepts are employed as technical devices, Shakespeare often relies on the Aristotelian tradition of dream theory to support his treatment. For example, the use of peaceful sleep as a sign of innocence and of disturbed sleep as a sign of guilt depends upon the understanding that the quality of sleep and the nature of dreams reflects the psychological state of the individual. The same belief permits Shakespeare to characterize individuals by means of the dreams they experience. However, the most important function

of sleep and dream in the plays considered in this study is thematic, and in his thematic treatment of the concepts, Shakespeare follows the Platonic tradition of Renaissance psychology.

The relationship between the dreamer and the spiritual realm, discussed by Platonic theorists throughout history, is apparent in all the plays in which sleep and dream play a major role. The unconscious mind is recognized as a possible source of knowledge and as a means of extending perception. The blurring of the boundary between illusion and reality in many of the plays in which sleep and dream are emphasized, suggests the importance of recognizing the value of dream perception. Sometimes the dream vision conveys more understanding of the real world than the individual is able to perceive with his limited rational consciousness.

The response of the individual to the spiritual insight he receives in his dream is often the most important choice with which he is confronted. Dreams are not to be disregarded. Far from being "but vain fantasy (Rom. I. iv. 98), dreams in Shakespeare are almost always the source of vitally important information. The dreamer must attempt to interpret the message which he has been given, to determine its source, and to respond appropriately. If the source is demonic, he must not only reject the dream, but he must also recognize what it reveals about his own moral weaknesses. Caution is necessary because

> oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
> The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
> Win us with honest trifles, to betray's
> In deepest consequence. (Mac. I. iii. 122-25).

However, the dreamer must also be careful not to reject dreams which have a divine source. Tragic consequences often result from the disregard of prophetic warnings received in the form of dreams and

visions.

Divinely-inspired dreams also serve as catalysts of spiritual metamorphosis in the work of Shakespeare. The Platonic tradition holds that during sleep the soul, unencumbered by the restraints of the body, wanders freely in the realm of the spirit, gaining knowledge which sometimes brings about transformation. Shakespeare expands the concept to include the spiritual freedom and insight granted by the imaginative experience of art. By means of both the dream-like illusion of art and the dream itself, man is therefore able to transcend the limits of his senses and perceive a dimension of reality to which his waking self is blind.

Ultimately the thematic use of sleep and dream in Shakespeare points to the necessity of recognizing realities beyond the limits of reasonable waking perception. The illusory power of dream and of its sister, art, permits the responsive individual to grasp hidden truth which may alter his behavior, his future, or his total being. Although Shakespeare frequently uses the concepts to serve other purposes, sleep and dream perform their most significant function in those plays in which they illuminate the nature of art, of reality, and of the human spirit.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

[1]This is the basic approach to dream theory taken by Francis X. Newman in his dissertation Somnium: Medieval Theories of Dreaming and the Form of Vision Poetry, Diss.(Princeton: 1963).

[2]Aristotle, Aristotle's Psychology: "De Anima" and "Parve Naturalia", W. A. Hammond trans.(London: MacMillan, 1902).

[3]Ibid., p. 223.

[4]Ibid., p. 234.

[5]Ibid., p. 225.

[6]Ibid., p. 239.

[7]Ibid., p. 248.

[8]Ibid., p. 251.

[9]Ibid., p. 245.

[10]Plato, Timaeus, John Warrington trans. (London: Dent, 1965), p. 45.

[11]Plato, The Republic, H. D. P. Lee trans. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955), p. 344.

[12]Plato, Phaedo, David Gallop trans. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 4.

[13]Ibid., p. 4

[14]Newman, Somnium, p. 13.

[15]Homer, The Odyssey, W. H. D. Rouse trans.(New York: New American Library, 1937), XIX, p. 224, 11. 559-67.

[16]Sir Thomas Browne, "On Dreams," Works, Geoffrey Keynes ed. 6 Vols. (London: Faber and Faber), V. 187.

[17]G. C. Field, The Philosophy of Plato, (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 19.

[18]I Cor., 13:12.

[19]Pedro Calderon, Life is a Dream, Edwin Honig trans. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1970), p. 77.

[20]Shakespeare, The Complete Penguin Shakespeare, Alfred Harbage ed. (Baltimore: Penguin, 1956), (Tmp. IV. i. 156-57).

[21]Sir Walter Ralegh, "What is our Life?", in English Renaissance Poetry, John Williams ed. (New York: Norton, 1963), p. 132.

[22]The retreat from the everyday world into a magical forest world is common in Romance. A similar movement takes place in The Tempest. Prospero's island, like the Athenian wood, is a realm of dream and magic dominated by a ruling force. In both The Tempest and A Midsummer Night's Dream the common structure of romance is combined with the concept of supernaturally inspired dream. As a result, the spiritual realm is given a spatial dimension.

[23]Newman, Somnium, pp. 41-45.

[24]Artemidorus, Oneirocritica: The Interpretation of Dreams, Robert J. White trans. (Park Ridge, N.J.: Noyes press, 1975), p. 15.

[25]Ibid., pp. 20-21.

[26]Macrobius, Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, William H. Stahl trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), p. 88.

[27]Ibid., p. 92.

[28]Newman, Somnium, p. 67.

[29]Ibid., p. 75.

[30]Werner Wolff, The Dream--Mirror of Conscience, (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1952), pp. 13-14.

[31]Jeremiah, 23:32.

[32]Joel, 2:28.

[33]Moses Ben Maimon, The Guide for the Perplexed, M. Friedlander trans.(n.p.: Dover Publications, 1904 rpt. 1956), p. 240.

[34]Since the Renaissance Puritans emphasized the importance of biblical revelation, Puritan artists, such as John Bunyan, often followed established biblical patterns in their writing. The Pilgram's Progress is an example of the literary presentation of spiritual insight in the form of a dream.

[35]Newman, Somnium, p. 82. The discussion of Philo Judaeus is based on the accounts given by Newman and by Lynn Thorndike in A History of Magic and Experimental Science, 8 Vols., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929-34), I. 358.

[36]John Milton, Paradise Lost, in Complete Poems and Major Prose, Merritt Hughes ed. (Indianapolis: The Odyssey Press, 1957).

Eve's dream in Paradise Lost shows that the concept of demonically inspired dreams did persist amongst Christian writers even after the time of Shakespeare. Adam recognizes the evil inspiration of his wife's dream:

> The trouble of thy thoughts this night in
> Sleep affects me equally; nor can I like
> This uncouth dream, of evil sprung I fear
> (PL. V. 96-98).

Despite Adam's attribution of the dream to Eve's imagination, the reader is aware of the demonic source.

Since Satan shapes Eve's dream, she is not responsible for its evil form. However, she is shown to be morally responsible for her reaction to the vision:

> Evil into the mind of God or Man
> May come and go, so unapprov'd and leave
> No spot or blame behind: Which gives me hope
> That what in sleep thou didst abhor to dream,
> Waking thou never wilt consent to do.
> (PL. V. 117-21).

[37]Newman, p. 96.

[38]Ibid., p. 115.

[39]Thorndike, A History of Magic and Experimental Science, IV. 293.

[40]Ibid., p. 293.

[41]Newman, Somnium, p. 141.

[42]Ibid., p. 180.

[43]Ibid., p. 184.

[44]Robert Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, Floyd Dell and Paul Jordon-Smith eds. (New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1955), p. 466.

[45]Ibid,. p. 466.

[46]Ibid., p. 465.

[47]Thomas Nash, The Terrors of the Night or, A Discourse of Apparitions, (London: John Daniel, 1594), sig. B.i.

[48]Ibid., sig. C. iii.

[49]Ibid., sig. C. iv.

[50]Ibid., sig. D. i.

[51]Robert Sanderson, Twelve Sermons, (London: Augustus Mathews, 1632), p. 504.

[52]Henry Smith, Satan's Compassing the Earth, (London: Thomas Scarlet, 1592), sig. C. i.

[53]Thomas Adams, "The Way Home", in The Workes of Thomas Adams, (London: Thomas Harper, 1629), pp. 840-49.

[54]Ibid., p. 843.

[55]Christiana's response to Mercy's dream indicates the acceptance of spiritual revelation through dreams by Renaissance Protestants:

> God speaks once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumbering upon the bed. We need not, when a-bed, lie awake to talk with God; he can visit us while we sleep, and cause us then to hear his voice. Our heart oft times wakes when we sleep, and God can speak to that, either by words, by proverbs, by signs and similitudes, as well as if one was awake.

John Bunyan, Pilgrim's Progress, Roger Sharrock ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), p. 273.

[56]Sir Thomas Browne, "On Dreams", p. 183.

[57]Ibid., p. 183

[58]Sir Thomas Browne, Selections from Religio Medici, in Seventeenth Century Prose and Poetry, Witherspoon and Warnke eds. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1963), p. 349.

[59]Ibid., p. 349.

[60]George Gascoigne, "Gascoygnes Good Night," in The Anchor Anthology of Sixteenth Century Verse, Richard Sylvester ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974), p. 257.

[61]William Ames, Conscience with the power and cases thereof, (London: n.p., 1632), sig. G.i.

[62]Ibid., sig. G.ii.

[63]Newman, Somnium, p. 253.

[64]John Bunyan, Pilgrim's Progress, p. 37.

[65]Geoffrey Chaucer, The Nun's Priest's Tale, in The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, F. N. Robinson ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), p. 20[redacted] 4112-115.

[66]Constance Hiett, The Realism of Dream Visions: The Poetic Exploration of the Dream Experience in Chaucer & His Contemporaries. (The Hague: Mouton, 1967),p. 103.

Chapter II

[1]Robert Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith eds. (New York: Tudor Publishing Co,, 1955), p.464.

[2]Miguel Cervantes, Don Quixote, Samuel Putnam trans., 2 Vols.(New York: Viking Press, 1949), II, 953.

[3]All parenthetical references are to William Shakespeare: The Complete Works, Alfred Harbage ed. (Baltimore: Penguin, 1956).

[4]Thomas Nash, The Terrors of the Night, or a Discourse of Apparitions, (London: John Daniel, 1594), sig. Bi.

[5]The innocence of the elder Hamlet as a victim does not necessarily imply that his apparition is innocent. He confesses that he was

> Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
> Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled,
> No reck'ning made, but sent to my account
> With all my imperfections on my head.
> (Ham. I. v. 76-79).

There are several indications in the play that the King had been a good ruler and a good man, the "blossoms of his sin" were probably no greater than those of any man. Even the innocent Duncan was not sinless. But whether the ghost comes to Hamlet from hell or from purgatory, his origin does not negate the presentation of his death as the murder of an innocent victim.

[6]A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, (London: MacMillan, 1904), pp. 384-86.

[7]Virgil Whitaker, The Mirror up to Nature, (San Marion, Calf.: The Huntington Library, 1964), p. 265

[8]Before the battle of Agincourt the Tudor hero Henry is also unable to sleep. However, despite the parallel between his sleeplessness and that of his father, in Henry V insomnia is a reflection of apprehension rather than guilt. It is the burden of responsibility, not conscience, which keeps Hal awake:

> 'Tis not the balm, the sceptre, and the ball,
> The sword the mace, the crown imperial
> The intertissued robe of gold and pearl,
> The farcèd title running 'fore the King,
> The throne he sits on, nor the tide of pomp
> That beats upon the high shore of this world--
> No, not all these, laid in bed majestical,
> Can sleep as soundly as the wretched slave,
> Who, with a body filled, and vacant mind,
> Gets him to rest, crammed with distressful bread;
> Never sees horrid night, the child of hell.
> (H5. IV. i. 246-56).

[9]Marjorie Garber, Dream in Shakespeare: From Metaphor to Metamorphasis, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 41.

[10]Ibid., p. 28.

[11]Anne Righter, Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1962), p. 58.

[12]Aerol Arnold, "The Recapitulaiton Dream in Richard III and Macbeth," SQ, 6(1955), pp. 51-62.

[13]Ibid., p. 52.

[14]Bain Tate Stewart, "The Misunderstood Dreams in the Plays of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries," in Essays in Honour of Walter Clyde Curry, Editorial Committee, Dept. of English (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1954), p. 198.

[15]Garber, Dream in Shakespeare, p. 43.

[16]Stewart, "The Misunderstood Dreams," p. 206.

[17]Garber, p. 25.

Chapter III

[1]Sir Thomas Browne, "On Dreams," in Works, Geoffrey Keynes ed., 6 Vols. (London: Faber & Faber, 1928-31), V, 183.

[2]All parenthetical references are to William Shakespeare: The Complete Works, Alfred Harbage ed. (Baltimore: Penguin, 1956).

[3]Kenneth Muir, Shakespeare's Tragic Sequence, (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1972), p. 149.

[4]Francis X. Newman, Somnium: Medieval Theories of Dreaming, Diss. (Princeton, 1963), p. 13.

[5]Maimonides, The Guide for the Perplexed, M. Friedlander trans., (n.p.: Dover Publications, 1904 [1956]), p. 240.

[6]The word "supernatural" will henceforth be applied to both divine and demonic forces, although it technically refers only to those spiritual powers which are "above" man. The common use of the term for both the demonic and divine is not only modern, but also Shakespearean. Macbeth says of the indisputably demonic message of the witches, "This supernatural soliciting/cannot be ill, cannot be good." (Mac. I. iii. 130-31).

[7]Marjorie Garber, Dream in Shakespeare: From Metaphor to Metamorphosis, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 26.

[8]Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 104.

[9]Garber, Dream in Shakespeare, p. 26.

[10]G. Wilson Knight, The Wheel of Fire, (London: Methuen, 1930), p. 139.

[11]"And one Artemidorus also, born in the Isle of Gnidos, a doctor of rhetoric in the Greek tongue, who by means of his profession was very familiar with certain of Brutus' confederates and therefore knew the most part of all their practices against Caesar, came and brought him a little bill written with his own hand, of all that he meant to tell him." T. J. B. Spencer ed. Shakespeare's Plutarch, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), p. 91.

[12]The connection of Artemidorus with the misconstrued dream of Calphurnia and the disregarded message of the soothsayer, another dreamer, strongly suggest the classical expert on the interpretation of dreams.

[13]See Brents Stirling "Or Else were this a Savage Spectacle," in Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism, Leonard Dean ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 206-17.

[14]G. Wilson Knight, The Wheel of Fire, p. 146.

[15]Henry Smith, Satan's Compassing the Earth, (London: Thomas Scarlet, 1592), Sig. ci.

[16]Aquinas is discussed in Lynn Thorndike, A History of Magic and Experimental Science, 8 Vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929-34), IV, 293.

[17]Kenneth Muir, Shakespeare's Tragic Sequence, p. 151.

[18]Albert Wertheim, " 'Things Climb upward to What they were Before', The Reteaching and Regreening of Macbeth," in Teaching Shakespeare, Walter Edens et. al. eds. (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 121.

[19]G. Wilson Knight, The Wheel of Fire, p. 153

[20]L. C. Knights, Some Shakespearean Themes, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966), p. 121.

[21]G. Wilson Knight, The Wheel of Fire, p. 153.

[22]Ibid., p. 129.

Chapter IV

[1]This point of view is expressed by D. A. Traversi:

> Those who "see," who pride themselves on their clear-sighted appraisal of the world and its ways, find themselves betrayed by their sight, are, in fact, in a very real and tragic sense, blind; while those who have lost their eyes,

> or whom their self-styled "betters" may have regarded as incapable of "vision," may, in the very moment of losing them, receive a flash of moral illumination, in fact, "see."

D. S. Traversi, An Approach to Shakespeare, 2 Vols. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1938 [1969]), II, 160.

[2]All parenthetical references are to William Shakespeare: The Complete Works, Alfred Harbage ed. (Baltimore: Penguin, 1956).

[3]Music, sleep and psychological stability, in this case deriving from love, are also equated in Othello. Iago intends to cause psychological discord in the Moor comparable to dissonant music:

> O, you are well tuned now!
> But I'll set down the pegs that make this music,
> As honest as I am. (Oth. II. i. 197-99).

Once he succeeds in setting down the pegs, Iago also succeeds in effectively disrupting Othello's sleep:

> Not poppy nor mandragora,
> Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,
> Shall ever med'cine thee to that sweet sleep
> Which thou owedst yesterday. (Oth. III. iii. 330-33).

[4]The powerful effect of music on the sleeping Lucius does not imply a greater perception of reality on his part than on the part of his master. Lucius is a "good boy," a musician who sleeps soundly. Shakespeare does not develop the child's character, but rather employs him symbolically. The significance of the scene does not lie in Lucius' ability to respond to music, but in the inability of Brutus to respond.

[5]John Bunyan makes the same connection between the dream-like illusion of art and heightened spiritual perception in the "Author's Apology" of Pilgrim's Progress:

> Would'st thou be in a dream and yet not sleep?
> Or would'st thou in a moment laugh and weep?
> Wouldest thou lose thyself, and catch no harm
> And find thyself again without a charm?
> Would'st read thyself, and read thou know'st not what
> And yet know whether thou art blest or not,
> By reading the same lines?

John Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress, Roger Sharrock ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p. 37.

[6]Bain Tate Stewart, "The Misunderstood Dreams in the Plays of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries," Essays in Honour of Walter Clyde Curry, Editorial Committee (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1954), p. 198.

[7]For example, G. K. Hunter asserts,

> Seen against the fairies, the lovers are absurd; set against the rational love of Theseus and Hippolyta, the mature and royal lovers who frame and explain the occasion of the play, it is the irrationality of their emotion which is emphasized.

G. K. Hunter, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Shakespeare: Modern Essays In Criticism, Leonard Dean ed. (London: Ocford University Press, 1957), p. 94.

[8]Marjorie Garber, Dream in Shakespeare: From Methaphor to Metamorphosis, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 84.

[9]Ibid., pp. 62-63.

[10]G. K. Hunter, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," p. 96.

[11]In the passage quoted, Paul refers to Isaiah 64:4:

> For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. (Is. 64:).

[12]G. Wilson Knight, The Shakespearean Tempest, (London: Methuen, 132), p. 160.

> Knight goes on to say, "Theseus enters on our night of fears and fairyland as a rising sun . . . Christ like, he rises on the tormenting imaginations of fairyland, the pagan terrors of the midnight wood." (p. 160).

In his comparison of Theseus with Christ, Knight fails to consider the inadequacies of the Duke within the play. The scene is a reminder of the last judgement, but Theseus is no more a Christ figure because of his role in this scene than is Macduff in the parallel scene from Macbeth.

[13]The destructive power unleashed by the angry fairies belies the possibility that they are representatives of divine power. Nevertheless, they are closer to the divine than the demonic. Unlike the powers of evil they have no reason to fear the light. They "are spirits of another sort" (MND. III. ii. 388) who oppose themselves to the "damned spirits all" (MND. III. ii. 382) that exist only in darkness.

[14]This discussion of structure is based on a study by David P. Young, "A Midsummer Night's Dream: Structure," in Modern

Shakespearean Criticism, Alvin B. Kernan ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1970), pp. 174-189.

[15]Ibid., p. 178.

[16]C. L. Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 133.

[17]G. K. Hunter, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," p. 91.

[18]D. G. James, The Dream of Prospero, (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1967).

[19]Reuben Brower, "The Tempest," in Shakespeare: Modern Essay in Criticism, Leonard Dean ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 462.

[20]Ibid., p. 466.

[21]Although Prospero questions Miranda's attentiveness several times, her drowsiness is not made explicit until the end of the passage:

> Thou art inclined to sleep. 'Tis a good dullness,
> And give it way. I know thou canst not choose.
> (Tmp. I. ii. 185-6).

Despite the fact that sleepiness is not made the specific cause for Miranda's wandering attention earlier in the passage, it is natural to assume on the basis of Prospero's remark that her inclination to sleep has been visually apparent throughout the scene.

[22]Bonamy Dobree, "The Tempest," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of the Tempest, Hallett Smith ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1969), p. 54.

[23]Alex Aronson, Psyche and Symbol in Shakespeare, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), p. 13.

[24]S. L. Bethell, "Planes of Reality," Modern Shakespearean Criticism, Alvin B. Kernan ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1970), pp. 21-22.

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